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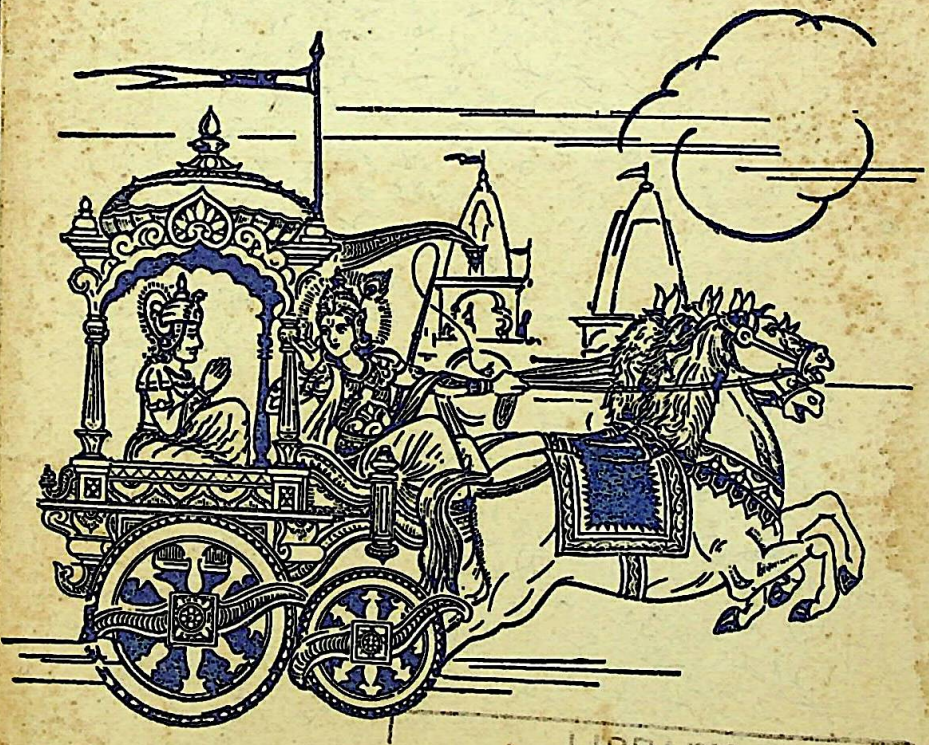
THE BHAGAVAD GITA

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

BY

ARTHUR OSBORNE & PROF. G. V. KULKARNI



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FOR FAVOUR OF REVIEW
Please Send Review Copy.

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T. N. VENKATARAMAN
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PREFACE

The contents of this book were first published serially in *The Mountain Path*, the quarterly journal of Sri Ramanasramam. They are now issued in the form of a book for facility of reference.

T. N. VENKATARAMAN
President
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Sri Ramanasramam
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INTRODUCTION

The Brahmasutras, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita are regarded as the *Prasthanatrayi* or 'threefold scriptures' of Hinduism. Of these the Gita is the most widely read and loved and has been most often translated. There is, however, to our knowledge, no very satisfactory rendering of it in English. To translate poetry is always a formidable task, and when the poetry is also scripture it becomes far more so, since every word has significance and should be adequately rendered. There are a number of 'literary' translations, from Edwin Arnold downwards, but all of them blur the clear lines of doctrine and give too vague an indication of the meaning, In India a number of more literal translations have been made, but these are mostly in ungainly English, and even so the rendering is seldom precise and adequate. It is hoped in this translation to combine fidelity with good English, but the first emphasis will be on fidelity, since no one is authorised to tamper with scripture.

The Gita is an episode in one of India's two great epic poems, the Mahabharata. This is a vast work, many times longer than the Homeric poems. It contains a wealth of mythology and much religious and ethical teaching but is mainly centred around the quarrel between the Pandavas and Kauravas culminating in the Battle of Kurukshetra.[1] Briefly the story is this.

King Pandu had five sons who were accordingly known as the Pandavas. After his death his brother Dhritarashtra became king and brought up Pandu's five together with his

1 'The Field of Kuru', *kshetra* meaning 'field' and Kuru being the ancestor of both Pandavas and Kauravas.

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own hundred sons. He was blind and weak and could not restrain his sons, especially the eldest of whom, Duryodanal, was violent and treacherous. They plotted against the Pandavas, tricked them out of their heritage and drove them into exile. The final result of this was the great Battle of Kurukshetra in which most of the Aryan kings were aligned with one side or the other and the flower of Indian chivalry was destroyed.

This human cycle or manvantara is said to be divided into four ages or yugas of progressively diminishing excellence, equivalent to the ancient Western conception of the four ages of gold, silver, copper and iron. The Battle of Kurukshetra is held by some to mark the transition from the third age to the fourth, the kali-yuga or 'dark age' in which we now live.

Krishna, the Avatar or Divine Incarnation, was living at this time as Prince of Mathura. Both sides sought his alliance. He was bound by affection to the Pandavas and recognized their noble qualities, but he felt some obligation to the Kauravas also. Therefore, when both sides came to claim his alliance, he said that one could have his army while he himself would go with the other, but unarmed. The Kauravas chose his army, while Arjuna, the most famous of the Pandavas, chose Krishna himself to go with him as his charioteer. Those who placed material aid above spiritual thereby sealed their doom.

Just as the battle was beginning, Arjuna told Krishna to drive his chariot between the two armies. Seeing this mighty concourse gathered for mutual destruction seeing, moreover friends, relatives and revered elders on the side of the enemy as well as his own, his heart failed him. He did not desire victory or dominion, he declared, if won by such

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slaughter. "Better for me were the sons of Dhritarashtra, weapon in hand, to slay me unarmed and unresisting."

Krishna, however, will have none of this non-violence. He explains to Arjuna that it is his duty as a kshatriya, a member of the warrior caste, to destroy evil and uphold righteousness. In this dramatic setting develops a complete exposition of the meaning and purpose of life and the paths men can tread to its fulfilment.

The story is supposed to be told to Dhritarashtra by Sanjaya who witnessed and overheard it all.

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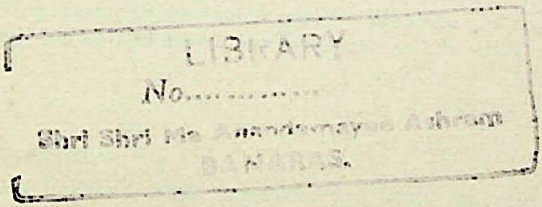

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The Bhagavad Gita

CHAPTER ONE

In this first chapter the stage is set. The two opposing armies are reviewed and then the despondency of Arjuna is described.

Why was the battlefield chosen as the stage for Arjuna's instruction? The choice has tremendous literary effect, but the explanation goes deeper than that. It shows vividly that the inner warfare is to be waged on the battlefield of life, not through withdrawal from life. Krishna might have instructed Arjuna in a cave far from distractions, but no: instead is chosen a setting where the teaching is immediately to be put into effect by combining the most strenuous outer activity with the right attitude of mind.

1

Said Dhritarashtra:

"When Pandu's sons met mine for battle on the Field of Dharma, the Field of Kuru, tell me what happened, Sanjaya."

The word 'dharma' is left in Sanskrit as no single word translates it adequately. It implies uprightness or harmony, with its opposite 'adharma' as unrighteousness or disharmony. It is natural or divine law and thence comes to mean the action that is true to a man's nature and the religiously inspired social order of a community. Speaking of the individual, the Gita says (XVIII, 47): "Better one's own dharma though faultily performed than that of another though well performed. Doing the duty ordained by one's own nature one incurs no sin." That is to say that a man should act according to his own nature and the circumstances in which he is placed and not try to imitate another or play the role of another. Speaking of society it says (IV, 7): "Whenever dharma declines and adharma triumphs I manifest myself."

Dharma is, perhaps, the central concept of Hinduism. It is significant that it is the opening word of the Bhagavad Gita. The expression "Dharmakshetra, Kurukshetra" indicates that the battle of Kurukshetra

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was also a battle of righteousness against wrong-doing. In a deeper sense it implies that the battle is also the inner warfare of dharma against adharma that each man has to fight.

2

Said Sanjaya:

"When Prince Duryodhana beheld the army of the Pandavas drawn up in battle order he approached his teacher and spoke thus:

Duryodhana was the eldest of the Kauravas, that is of the sons of Dhritarashtra. It was he who was mainly responsible for the war. His teacher was Drona, renowned instructor of both Kauravas and Pandavas in the art of war.

3

"Behold, Master, this grand army of the Pandavas marshalled by your able pupil Drupada.

4

"Here are archers mighty in battle, like Bhima and Arjuna, warriors such as Yuyudhama and Virata, here Drupada the Maharatha.

Bhima, one of the Pandava brothers and leader of their forces, was famous for his strength and prowess.

5

"Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana and the valiant King of Kasi, Purujit, Kuntibhoja and Shaibya mighty among men.

Kasi is the modern Benares.

6

"The heroic Yudhamanyu and Uttamauja the brave; the son of Subhadra and those of Draupadi, all mighty charioteers.

Draupadi was the daughter of Drupada and joint wife of the five Pandavas. Her five sons took part in the battle.

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7

" Know also, O best of the twice-born, who are foremost on our side and leaders of my army. Let me recite their names for you.

The twice-born are those of the upper castes, that is to say those who are eligible for initiation and spiritual guidance.

8

" Yourself and Bhishma, Karna and Kripa the vanquisher, Ashavatthama and Vikarna, and also Somadatta's son.

9

" And many other heroes that have pledged their lives for me, armed with diverse weapons, all well skilled in war.

10

" Unlimited this army of ours marshalled by Bhishma, while that of theirs, marshalled by Bhima, is limited.

11

" Therefore stand firm, all in your ranks and places, and all support Bhishma."

12

To rejoice him then Bhishma the Mighty, eldest of the Kauravas, Bhishma the Grandsire, let forth a roar like a lion and sounded his conch.

13

Suddenly conches and kettle-drums, tabors, drums and horns blared forth and stupendous was the noise.

14

Then Krishna and Arjuna also, seated in their great chariot drawn by white horses, blew their heavenly conches.

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The names actually used are 'Madhava' for Krishna and 'Pandava' for Arjuna.

15

Krishna sounded Panchajanya and Arjuna Devadatta; Bhima of the mighty deeds sounded his great conch Poundra.

The name used for Krishna here is 'Hrishikesha,' meaning 'Lord of the senses' and for Arjuna 'Dhananjaya' meaning 'Conqueror of wealth.'

Panchajanya, Krishna's conch, is so called because it was made from the bones of Pancha, a demon he had slain. 'Devadatta,' the name of Arjuna's, means 'God-given.'

The name used for Bhima is 'Vrikodara' meaning 'Wolf-Belly,' on account of his huge appetite.

16

Prince Yudhisthira son of Kunti sounded Anantavijaya; Nakula and Sahadeva sounded Sughosha and Manipushpaka.

Yudhishtira was the eldest of the Pandavas. He and the next two brothers, Arjuna and Bhima, were the sons of Kunti, Pandu's senior wife. The twins Nakula and Sahadeva were the sons of his junior wife, Madri.

17, 18

The King of Kasi, great archer, Shikhandi the Maharatha, Dhrishtadyumna, Virata and Satyaki the invincible, Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, O Lord of the earth, and the stout armed son of Subhadra, these from all sides sounded their conches.

19

That tumultuous uproar, resounding through heaven and earth, rent the hearts of Dhritarashtra's sons.

20, 21

Then Arjuna, son of Pandu, he of the Hanuman banner, seeing the sons of Dhritarashtra marshalled for battle, took

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up his bow just as the fighting began and spoke thus, great king, to Krishna: "Drive my chariot between the two armies, Achyuta,

'Achyuta,' a name for Krishna, means 'firm' or 'immovable.'

22

"So that I can see those gathered here for war, with whom I must fight now that the battle begins.

23

"Let me gaze upon those who have assembled here to serve in battle the evilminded son of Dhritarashtra."

24, 25

Sanjaya continued:

Hearing Arjuna speak thus, O Bharata, Krishna drove his splendid chariot between the two hosts, facing Bhishma and Drona and all the kings, and said: "Behold these Kurus assembled here, O son of Pritha."

The name used for Arjuna here is 'Gudakesha' and for Krishna 'Hrishikesha.' 'Gudakesha'—one who has controlled sleep.

26, 27

Then Arjuna son of Pritha saw fathers and grandfathers, teachers, uncles and brothers, sons and grandsons, fathers-in-law, friends and companions drawn up for battle in the two armies. When Arjuna son of Kunti saw all these kinsmen standing thus arrayed,

28, 29

Great compassion came over him and sorrowfully he said: "Seeing these kinsfolk of mine drawn up for battle, Krishna, my limbs droop, my mouth is parched, my body trembles and my hair stands on end;

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30

"The bow Gandiva slips from my hand, my skin is burning, my mind reels and I cannot stand.

31

"I see ill omens, Keshava, nor do I foresee any good from slaying my kinsfolk in battle.

32

"I desire not victory, Krishna, nor dominion nor pleasures. Of what use to us is dominion, Govinda, or pleasure or even life?

33

"Those for whose sake I desired dominion, pleasure and enjoyment are gathered here for battle, staking their wealth and life,

34

"Those teachers, fathers and sons, grandfathers and uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other kinsfolk.

35

"These I do not wish to kill, O Slayer of Madhu, even though killed myself, not for lordship of the three worlds, much less for the sake of this earth.

The three worlds of heaven and earth and the intermediate zone.

36

"What joy would remain to us, Janardana, after slaying the sons of Dhritarashtra? Only sin would accrue to us from the slaying of these evil-doers.

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37

" Therefore it does not behove us to slay our kinsfolk, the sons of Dhritarashtra, O Madhava. How can we be happy after killing our own people?

38, 39

" Even though these, their minds clouded by greed, see no evil in destruction of family and no sin in treachery to friends, should not we have the wisdom to turn away from this sin, Janardana, and to see evil in the destruction of the family?

40

" On the destruction of a family its ancient dharma perishes, and when its dharma perishes adharma overtakes the whole family.

41

" When adharma prevails, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupt; with corruption of the women comes intermingling of the castes, O Descendent of the Vrishnis.

42

" This intermingling brings the family and its destroyers down to hell; their ancestors also fall, deprived of their offerings of rice and water.

Arjuna here maintains that destroying the moral standards and traditional practices of a family causes the downfall not only of future generations but past also, since those ancestors who have not attained final Liberation are still in need of ritual prayers for the dead, of which they will now be deprived.

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43

"Thus the evil deeds of those who destroy families lead through the intermingling of castes to subversion of the dharma both of race and family.

44

"We have heard it said, Janardana, that hell is the abode of those whose family dharma is subverted.

45

"Alas, what a great sin we are resolved upon, to slay our kinsfolk through desire for the pleasure of dominion!

46

"Better indeed for me were the sons of Dhritarashtra, weapon in hand, to slay me unarmed and unresisting."

47

Sanjaya continued:

"Having spoken thus on the battlefield, Arjuna cast aside his bow and arrow and sank down on the chariot seat, overwhelmed with grief."

Here ends the first chapter, the 'YOGA OF ARJUNA'S GRIEF,' *in the Blessed Bhagavad Gita, an Upanishad of the wisdom of the Absolute, a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna.*

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CHAPTER TWO

1

Said Sanjaya:

Despondent, overwhelmed with compassion (as he sat), his troubled eyes filled with tears, Krishna the Slayer of Madhu spoke to him.

2

Sri Bhagavan said:

Wherefore has this affliction in the hour of crisis fallen on you, Arjuna? It becomes not the noble soul, leads not to heaven, but brings disgrace.

The appellation used here for Krishna is 'Sri Bhagavan' meaning 'Lord God,' the same that was commonly used in addressing Ramana Maharshi.

3

Yield not to unmanliness, Son of Pritha; it beseems you not. Cast off this base faint-heartedness; arise, O Scourge of the hostile.

4

Said Arjuna:

O Slayer of Madhu, how shall I loose my arrows in battle against Bhishma and Drona, both worthy of honour; how, Destroyer of the foe?

5

Better it were to live in the world a beggar than to slay these honoured teachers. Were I to slay my teachers, even though they seek their profit, the pleasures I enjoyed in the world would be stained with blood.

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6

Nor do we know which is better for us, that we should conquer them or they us, these sons of Dhritarashtra arrayed against us, slaying whom we should not care to live.

7

Overwhelmed with compassion and bewildered as to dharma, I appeal to you to tell me clearly which is better. I am your disciple; teach me; I seek refuge in you.

8

I see no way to dispel this grief that shrivels my senses even though I should attain wealth and unrivalled earthly power or lordship over the gods.

9

Sanjaya said:

Arjuna, the terror of his foes, spoke thus to Krishna: "I will not fight," he said, and fell silent.

10

(As he sat) despondent between the two hosts, O Bharata, Krishna of the Flowing Locks spoke thus, smiling as it were:

11

Sri Bhagavan said:

Although you speak of wisdom you grieve for those who need no grief. The wise grieve neither for the dead nor the living.

12

Never was a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor these lords of men, nor shall we ever hereafter cease to be.

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13

As the Embodied passes through childhood, youth and old age in this body, so does it take on a new body; the wise man is not confused by this.

At the beginning of this chapter Krishna simply exhorts Arjuna to be manly, as any comrade might, but in verse 7 Arjuna appeals to him for instruction, seeking refuge in him as his disciple. So now, beginning from verse 11, Krishna, speaking as a Guru, raises the discussion to a completely different plane, striking at the ignorance that is at the root of Arjuna's grief, that is the illusion of separate individual being. Verse 12 might seem contrary to this teaching since it affirms the permanence of Arjuna and his foes, but what it really implies is: "You are the eternal ever-existent Self, though not necessarily in the Arjuna-body; so also with each of these."

14

The sense-contacts it is, Son of Kunti, that cause heat and cold, pleasure and pain. They come and go and are impermanent. Bear with them, O Bharata.

15

The wise man whom these perturb not, O Chief of Men, who remains the same in pleasure and pain, he it is who fits himself for eternal life.

Again an apparent contradiction. If the Self endures eternally behind every series of incarnations, how does the wise man differ in this from others? The answer is that, by identifying himself with the Eternal Self and not the transient form it assumes, he experiences this eternity.

16

The unreal has no being, the Real no non-being. These two facts the Truth-seers perceive.

In this verse the present exposition culminates. It is the essence of metaphysics, the heart of doctrine. It is all the theory that one needs to know. Not that the illusory individual being will come to an end at death or Realization or that the true Self will be attained, but that now and

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eternally only the true Self is, while the apparent individual self is unreal, non-existent.

17

Know That which pervades all this to be indestructible. That immutable none can destroy.

18

It is these bodies of the eternal, indestructible, incomprehensible Embodied that are said to come to an end.

19

He who considers That to slay and he who considers It to be slain are alike in error. It slays not, nor is It slain.

20

That is not born, nor does It ever die; nor, having been, does It ever cease to be. That unborn, eternal, abiding, primeval Being is not slain when the body is slain.

21

Knowing It to be indestructible, eternal, beginningless, immutable, whom can a man slay or cause to be slain, O Son of Pritha?

22

Just as a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, so does the Embodied cast off worn-out bodies and take on new.

23

Weapons cleave Him not, fire burns Him not, waters drench Him not, wind dries Him not.

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24

Invulnerable He is, not to be burnt, not to be drenched or dried. He is eternal, all pervading, changeless, motionless, enduring.

25

He is said to be unmanifest, beyond thought, immutable. Knowing Him to be so you should not greive.

26

Even if you consider That evermore coming to birth and evermore dying, still should you not grieve, O Mighty-Armed;

27

For to him who is born death is indeed certain, and to him who dies birth is certain. Therefore should you not grieve for the inevitable.

28

Beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in mid-course, and unmanifest again in their end, O Bharata. What is there in this for lamentation?

29

One looks upon Him as a wonder; another speaks of Him as a wonder; another hears of Him as a wonder; but though hearing of Him none know Him.

30

The Embodied in every body is eternal, O Bharata. Therefore should you not grieve for any creature.

31

Furthermore, in view of your own dharma you should

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not falter; there is no greater good for a Kshatriya than a battle enjoined by dharma.

The Kshatriyas are the warrior caste whose dharma is the upholding of righteousness and justice in the world. Krishna and Arjuna were both Kshatriyas.

From here to verse 38 Krishna resumes his exhortation to fight, but with the difference that Arjuna's illusion of the mortality of man has now been exposed, so that the objections to fighting need no longer appear so terrible.

32

Happy the Kshatriya, O Son of Pritha, to whom such a battle comes unsought, an open doorway to heaven.

33

But if you evade this righteous battle then will you betray your dharma and glory, and incur sin.

34

Moreover men will relate your lasting dishonour, and for one who has stood in honour dishonour is worse than death.

35

The great warriors in their chariots will think you left the battle from fear and you will be despised by those who thought well of you.

36

Many abusive words will your enemies speak, belittling your manhood. What could be more grievous than that?

37

(But if you fight) slain you will attain heaven or victorious you will enjoy the earth. Rise, therefore, Son of Kunti, resolved on battle.

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38

Regarding pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, with an equal eye, prepare for battle. Thus will you incur no sin.

39

This that has been told to you is the wisdom of Sankhya, O Son of Pritha. Hear now the wisdom of Yoga, which, if you grasp it, will free you from the bondage of action.

Sankhya and Yoga are two of the six Hindu orthodox darshanas, that is schools or viewpoints. However, the terms are not used here in quite this sense. 'Sankhya' is used rather to denote 'right understanding' and 'Yoga' 'right action.' Arjuna is instructed first in doctrine so as to correct his viewpoint and enable him to understand life as it really is; then his attitude to life and activity has to be prescribed so as to enable his new-found wisdom to fructify in total regeneration.

One thing that the terms 'Sankhya' and 'Yoga' as used here have in common with their traditional usage is that neither of them is theistic. They are not atheistic, since they do not deny God; but they do not employ the concept of a Personal God, although the Yoga-Sutras of Patanjali do recognize this in one verse as a possible approach; so also does this chapter of the Gita in one verse.

40

In this (path) no effort is wasted and no impediment prevails. Even a little of this dharma saves from great fear.

41

In this (path) the resolute are singleminded, O Joy of the Kurus, but the minds of the irresolute are divided and branch out endlessly.

42

The ignorant, being attached to the letter of the Vedas, declare in flowery language, O Son of Pritha, that there is nothing beyond.

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43

Bound by desire, they make paradise their goal; they seek rebirth as the fruit of their actions, practising various rites for attaining pleasure and power.

44

Their thoughts being turned to pleasure and power and their minds captivated by words, they do not abide in meditation.

Krishna is not here denouncing the evil-minded, as he is to do later, still less condemning the scriptures, but warning Arjuna against those formalists and ritualists (equivalent to the Pharisees of Christ's day) who are content to seek the proximate goal of a beatified individuality in a state of paradise.

The word 'Karma,' which is translated as 'action' at the end of verse 39, has the three cognate implications of action, ritual and destiny. It is against karma marga understood as ritualistic activity that Krishna warns Arjuna here; later he enjoins karma marga in the sense of disinterested activity.

45

The Vedas treat of the three gunas, but be free of the gunas, Arjuna, free too of the polarities, free of acquisition and preservation, established in the transcendental state, possessed of the Self.

The gunas are the three trends or tendencies whose mutual stress holds the universe in being; sattva, the aspiring, upward, spiritual tendency of return to the Source, whose colour is white; rajas the expansive, outward-going, active tendency, whose colour is red; tamas, the downward tendency, whose colour is black.

The opposites or polarities are the pairs such as good and evil, pleasure and pain, of which one implies the other. Arjuna is exhorted to abide in the Self, free from the gunas and above the polarities.

Yoga (etymologically 'union') is here translated, according to its context, to mean acquisition.

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46

No more use than a well in flooded land are the Vedas for an enlightened Brahmin.

Another reminder not to be dependent on scriptures. When understanding floods in from all sides, the collection of its records in scriptures, like water in a well, is not needed.

As remarked in the note on v. 31, Arjuna was not a Brahmin; both he and Krishna were Kshatriyas. But the Gita later on defines the true Brahmin as the man who knows Brahman, whatever his parentage may be. That is obviously the meaning here.

47

Your concern is only with action, never with its fruit. Be not motivated by the fruits of actions; but do not cling either to inaction.

So far as regards the conduct of life, this verse, further developed by those that follow, can be regarded as the essence of the Gita. It prescribes the application to life of the doctrine enunciated earlier. A man should play his part in the cosmic dance of life, acting according to dharma, doing what is right because it is right, not motivated by desire or fear or by his own profit, but also not shirking his role in life for inactivity. Applied to Arjuna it meant that, as a Kshatriya, he must fight a righteous war because that was his dharma, accepting with an equal mind victory or defeat, death or dominion. He was not obliged to renounce victory or dominion if it came to him; only if that was his motive in fighting it would be wrong.

48

Steadfast in yoga and without attachment, do your duty O Wealth-Winner, indifferent alike to success and failure, for equanimity is called yoga.

In this verse karma implies ' allotted work ' and is therefore translated ' duty.'

' Yoga ' is used here to imply an attitude of mind. Sometimes, as in the following verses, it is used as equivalent to ' marga ' to mean ' a path to Union.'

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49

Mere action is far inferior to the yoga of understanding (buddhiyoga), O Wealth-Winner. Seek refuge in understanding. Despicable are they whose motive is the fruit of their actions.

50

One who has mastered the yoga of understanding transcends good and evil even here. Therefore strive for yoga. Yoga is skill in action.

51

The wise who have mastered the yoga of understanding and renounced the fruit of activity are freed from the bond of rebirth and attain the state free from sorrow.

Here is the definite statement that right understanding combined with right action leads to Liberation.

52

When your mind has crossed the quagmire of delusion you will no longer care about what has been heard or what is to be heard.

This refers to the scriptures. Once delusion has been transcended instructions how to transcend it are no longer needed.

53

When your mind, bewildered now by the scriptures, stands firm and steadfast in concentration you will attain Yoga.

The word rendered as 'concentration' is samadhi.

Here, it will be seen, 'yoga' is used to mean not the path but the Goal. Indeed the path leads to and merges in the Goal. Similarly in China 'Tao' means both path and goal, and for Christians Christ is the Way and also the End.

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54

Arjuna said:

What is a man like who is established in wisdom and steadfast in concentration, Krishna? How does one of firm understanding speak, how does he sit, how does he walk?

So common a desire this in seekers—to model oneself on externals!

55

Sri Bhagavan said:

When a man casts out all desires of the mind, O Son of Pritha, and is content in himself he is said to be steadfast in wisdom.

56

He who is undismayed in grief and controlled amid pleasures, from whom lust, fear and anger have passed away, he it is who is called a Sage of steadfast wisdom.

The word translated 'Sage' is Muni, meaning 'silent,' a word still used with that implication.

57

He who is free from attachment, who accepts good and evil alike without excultation or loathing, his mind it is that is established in wisdom.

58

He who withdraws his senses from sense-objects as a tortoise draws in its limbs, he it is who is established in wisdom.

59

Sense objects withdraw from him who abstains from them, but their attraction remains. On seeing the Supreme even this goes.

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That is to say that abstinence as a discipline, although wise, is not enough. So long as desire has to be resisted it is not complete. Only when the Supreme State is seen desire itself passes away.

The word translated 'Supreme' is 'Para,' more often found in a compound as for instance 'Paramatma' or 'Parabrahman.'

60

Even though a man strives and is wise, O Son of Kunti, the impetuous senses forcibly distract his mind.

61

Restraining them all, let him remain steadfast, concentrated on Me, for he whose senses are under control is established in wisdom.

This is the only verse in the present book implying worship. The devotee will understand the 'Me' as Krishna, the follower of Sankhya or Yoga as the inner Self.

62

When the mind dwells on sense-objects attachment to them arises. From attachment springs desire, from desire anger.

63

From anger springs delusion, from delusion forgetfulness, from forgetfulness weakness of mind; and from weakness of mind a man perishes.

64

But he who moves among sense-objects with his mind and senses controlled, free from desire and aversion, attains serenity.

65

In serenity comes the cessation of all grief, for the mind of such a one is soon stabilised.

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66

The uncontrolled have no wisdom and the uncontrolled have no concentration. Without concentration there is no peace; and what happiness can there be without peace?

67

When the mind follows the wandering senses it carries away the understanding, as winds do a ship upon the waters.

68

Therefore, O Mighty-Armed, he whose senses are withdrawn from sense objects is established in wisdom.

69

When it is night for all beings the self-controlled is awake; when all beings are awake it is night for the Sage who sees.

That is to say that manifestation of the universe is obscuration of Pure Consciousness, while the re-absorption of multiplicity is the unveiling of pure Consciousness.

70

He attains peace whom all desires enter as waters do the ocean, leaving it undisturbed though ever being filled, not he who desires desire.

71

He attains peace who abandons all desires, acting without attachment, free from 'I' and 'mine.'

72

This is the Divine State (Brahmisthitih), O Son of Pritha, which having attained a man is free from delusion. Abiding in it even at the end (of life) he attains Brahma-Nirvana.

Here ends the Second Chapter entitled Sankhya-Yoga.

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CHAPTER THREE

1

Arjuna said:

If you consider understanding superior to action, O Scourge of the Foes, why then, You of the Beautiful Locks, do you urge me to this fearful action?

When told that action cannot lead one to Liberation it is natural to say: "All right, then, let me renounce action and just meditate." Some one said this to Ramana Maharashi and he replied: "Try and see. It is all right if you can but you will find that your own mind demands activity." Arjuna falls into the same mistake and in v. 5 is given the same answer. It is further explained to him that the remedy is not inactivity, which is not possible to man, but egoless activity. This also the Maharshi used to say: as he put it, it is not doing that has to be adjured but only the illusion that you are the doer.

2

With what seems to be unclear speech you confuse my mind, as it were. Please tell me the one way by which I may attain the supreme good.

3

Sri Bhagavan said:

In this world a twofold path was taught by me of old, O Blameless One; the path of knowledge for introverts and the path of action for extroverts.

Arjuna, as a Kshatriya, was directed to the Path of Action, but it is not to be supposed that less was therefore demanded of him. As he was told in the previous chapter, he is expected to transcend the polarities and the three gunas and thereby realize Identity. "But," as Dr. Radhakrishnan says in his commentary, "this distinction is not ultimate, for all men are in different degrees both introverts and extroverts." As the Maharshi said: "The four margas, karma, bhakti, yoga and jnana, are not exclusive of one another. Each is, however, described separately in classical works only to convey an idea of the appropriate aspect of God to appeal readily to the aspirant according to his disposition."

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4

Not by refraining from activity does a man attain freedom from action, nor by mere renunciation does he gain perfection.

5

Indeed, no one can remain even for a moment really inactive, for one is driven helplessly to action by the qualities of Nature.

6

The deluded person who controls his physical organs but lets his mind brood on the objects of sense is known as a hypocrite.

7

He it is who excels, Arjuna, who controls his senses with his mind and employs his physical organs in karma yoga without attachment.

8

Perform your allotted duty, for action is better than inaction. Even the preservation of life in the body is impossible without action.

9

People in this world are fettered by action unless it is performed as a sacrifice. Therefore, O Son of Kunti, let your action be sacrifice free from attachment.

It is to be remembered that the English word 'sacrifice' means etymologically 'make sacred' or 'sanctify.' The Sanskrit word is used in the Gita with a wide meaning covering 'sanctify' and 'sacrifice' in the modern meaning and even ritualistic sacrifice. It implies the dedication of one's actions to God.

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10

In the beginning Prajapati (as Creator) made men together with sacrifice and said: "By this you shall propagate and it shall be your cow of plenty."

11

Nourish the gods through this and let them nourish you. Thus nourishing one another you shall attain the highest good.

Here, of course, there is no reference to God as Supreme Being but to establishing harmony with higher powers which will be reflected by harmony on earth.

12

Nourished by sacrifice, the gods will bestow on you the enjoyments you desire. He who enjoys their gifts without offering to them in return is indeed a thief.

13

The righteous who eat the food remaining from sacrifice are absolved of all sins, but the impious who cook for themselves alone eat sin.

That is that food should be offered first in sacrifice and only afterwards partaken of. Analogously with all other enjoyments of life. See also Ch. IX, v. 27 for a still more emphatic assertion of this.

14

Creatures are the product of food, food is the product of rain, rain the product of sacrifice, and sacrifice the product of action.

15

Action is the product of the Vedas, and they of the Imperishable; hence the all pervading Brahman is ever-present in sacrifice.

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16

He who does not follow the cycle thus set in motion, O Son of Pritha, is sinful and self-indulgent and lives in vain.

17

For him, however, who rejoices only in the Self, is gratified with the Self and content with the Self no action is incumbent.

18

He has nothing to gain by actions done or to lose by those undone. He is not dependent on any one for the achievement of any object.

Krishna has been speaking of the necessary harmonisation of life. In these last two verses he reminds Arjuna that this does not apply to one whose life is already harmonised by absorption in the Self.

19

Therefore without attachment perform always the actions that are incumbent, for by disinterested activity man attains the Supreme.

20

It was by action that Janaka and others attained perfection. Perform actions, therefore, you also, as an example to mankind.

Janaka is a legendary king who had attained Enlightenment, (and also the father of Sita, Lord Rama's wife).

21

For whatever a great man does others imitate; whatever standard he sets up the people emulate.

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22

For me, O Son of Pritha, there is no action incumbent in the three worlds, nor anything unattained to attain, yet do I act.

23

If ever I ceased from unwearied action, O Son of Pritha, men would in all ways follow my example.

24

If I ceased from action these worlds would fall in ruin; I should cause social confusion and bring destruction on these people.

25

As the ignorant act from attachment, O Bharata, so should the wise act without attachment as an example to the people.

26

The wise man should not unsettle the minds of the ignorant who are attached to action. He also should engage in action, but as a form of yoga, and urge others to action.

27

When all actions are performed by the qualities of Nature, only he who is confused by the ego-sense imagines himself to be the actor.

28

But he, O Mighty-Armed, who discerns the qualities and their modes of action is never attached, knowing that it is the qualities that act upon the qualities.

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29

Those who are deluded by the qualities of Nature become attached to the actions produced by them; but he who knows the Whole should not unsettle the ignorant who sees only a part.

30

Fight, therefore, surrendering all your actions to Me, with mind centred on the Self, without desire or egoism and from your fever (of doubt) set free.

31

Those who constantly follow this teaching of mine with firm faith and without cavilling are set free from activity.

32

But know those who despise my teaching and reject it, to be deluded as to wisdom, senselessly doomed to perdition.

33

Even an enlightened man acts according to his nature. All creatures conform to their nature; what can restraint do?

34

Each sense has its objects of attraction and aversion, but one should not succumb to these for they are impediments on the path.

35

Better one's own dharma, however imperfect, than that of another though well performed. Better even to die following one's own dharma, for that of another is perilous.

This is considered one of the fundamental verses of the Gita: that one should follow one's own nature or destiny and not try to emulate that

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of others. The word translated 'imperfect' can mean either 'imperfectly performed' or 'inferior.' It applies primarily to social position. It implies also that one should develop according to one's own nature and not emulate that of some other person one envies or admires.

36

Arjuna said:

But what is it that drives a man to sin even against his will, as though under compulsion, Krishna of the Vrishnis?

37

Sri Bhagavan said:

It is desire and anger born of the quality rajas, utterly blinding and sinful. Know this to be the enemy.

38

As fire is concealed by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo in the womb, so is this teaching concealed by it.

39

Knowledge is darkened, O Son of Kunti, by this eternal foe of the knower in the form of desire, an insatiable conflagration.

40

Senses, mind (manas) and intellect (buddhi) are said to be its abode. Obscuring wisdom through them, it deludes the embodied.

41

Therefore, Prince of the Bharatas, control your senses first; thus shall you destroy this destroyer of knowledge and discrimination.

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42

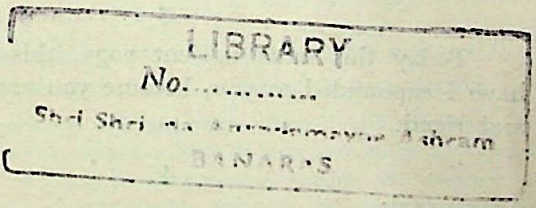
Mighty, they say, are the senses, mightier than these the mind, mightier than that the intellect, but mightier still is He.

The 'He' is ambiguous: it may refer to the Spirit or, as a warning, to desire. The following verse suggests that it is the former meaning that is intended.

43

Thus knowing Him who is beyond the intellect, O Mighty in Arms, control yourself by the Self and slay the enemy in the form of desire, hard though it may be.

Here ends the third chapter entitled
The Yoga of Action



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CHAPTER FOUR

1

Sri Bhagavan said:

I proclaimed this imperishable yoga to Vivasvan, he to Manu and Manu to Ikshvaku.

This is the tradition of the Gita teaching. Vivasvan is the Sun-God. His son, Manu, is the founder of the human race. Manu's son, Ikshvaku, was a famous king of the solar dynasty.

2

Thus handed down by tradition, the royal sages knew it, O Scourge of the Foe, until it was lost through long lapse of time.

Two important points arise from this verse: one is that the transmission is through royal or Kshatriya, not Brahmin, sages. And in this connection it is to be remembered that Rama and Krishna were both of royal descent, as, outside Hinduism, were Buddha and Christ also.

The second point is the affirmation, continued in vv. 3, 7 and 8, that religion, far from progressing, declines and needs periodical renewal,

3

Today this same ancient yoga, this supreme secret, have I expounded to you, because you are my worshipper and friend.

4

Arjuna said:

Later was your birth, earlier that of Vivasvan; how then am I to understand that you originally proclaimed this to him?

5

Sri Bhagavan said:

Many births of mine have gone by, and of yours too, Arjuna; I know them all, while you do not, O Scourge of the Foe.

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6

Unborn and eternal Self though I am, Lord of all beings though I am, yet resorting to my Nature (Prakriti) I take birth through my own Power (Maya).

Prakriti is 'Nature' in the sense of Universal Substance, undifferentiated, primordial, virgin and the Mother of all. Maya is illusion but also the power that creates illusion.

Here and in the next two verses is enunciated the doctrine of Avatars. An Avatar is not an ordinary mortal making karma or struggling to get free from karma but a Divine Incarnation assuming the appearance of human limitation for the welfare of mankind.

7

Whenever dharma decays and adharma prevails, O Bharata, I manifest Myself.

8

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil and for the establishment of dharma I take birth from age to age.

9

He who thus rightly knows My divine birth and activity is not reborn on leaving the body, Arjuna, but comes to Me.

This is an enunciation of Jnana-marga, the path of Knowledge. It is obvious that Liberation cannot come from mere knowledge of or belief in a historical fact. A deeper meaning must be sought. He who realizes the immersion of the uncontaminable Spirit in the apparent contamination of individual life and action cannot be encased again in the ignorant state of individual being but unites with the Spirit.

10

Many have there been who, free from attachment, fear and anger, absorbed in Me and taking refuge in Me, have been purified by the austerity (tapas) of wisdom and have attained My state.

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The term translated here and in the following verses as 'wisdom' is 'jnana,' meaning 'knowledge' in the sense of Divine Certitude, not mere mental understanding.

11

In whatever way men approach Me, in that way do I come to them. All paths that men follow are paths to me, O Son of Pritha.

12

Those who seek success in their actions here sacrifice to the gods, for action yields fruit speedily in this world.

13

The fourfold order of society I created on the basis of men's qualities and actions; yet, though I am its author, know Me to be inactive and immutable.

The chaturvarnya is the fourfold division of society into Brahmins or priests, Kshatriyas or warriors, Vaishyas or merchants and agriculturists, and Sudras or labourers. Natural propensities are said to have decided a man's caste at the beginning; later they became hereditary.

14

Activity does not contaminate Me, nor have I any craving for its fruit. He who knows this of Me is not bound by activity.

Here again the deeper meaning of 'Me' must be grasped. It is not knowing or believing the historical Krishna to have been such and such that can liberate a man but realizing his own true Self to be such.

15

(Safe) in this knowledge, the Ancients who sought Liberation engaged in activity. Do you also, therefore, engage in activity, as the Ancients did of old.

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16

What is activity and what is inactivity? About this even the wise are confused. I will explain to you what activity is, knowing which you will be freed from evil.

17

Activity has to be understood, also wrong activity, also inactivity. The nature of activity is hard to understand.

18

He alone is wise, he is a yogi, he has accomplished all activity, who sees inactivity in activity and activity in inactivity.

That is to say who sees detached activity to be inactivity and mere abstention from action to be activity. It is to be noted how this tallies with the Taoist teaching of *wei-wu-wei*, inactive activity.

19

One whose undertakings are all free from desire and whose activity has been purified in the flame of wisdom is termed a Sage by those who know.

20

Indifferent to the fruits of action ever content and utterly independent, he is inactive even while engaged in activity.

21

One who engages in activity with his body only, without desire, controlled in heart and mind, having renounced possessions, incurs no sin.

22

Satisfied with what comes to him by chance, beyond the pairs of opposites, free from envy, equal in success and failure, he is not bound by his actions.

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23

The activity of one who is detached and set free, whose mind is stabilized in wisdom, whose action is sacrifice, is entirely dissolved.

24

The act of offering is Brahman, the oblation is Brahman, the fire in which it is offered is Brahman, the offerer himself is Brahman. By acting with his mind fixed ever on Brahman a man becomes Brahman.

25

Some yogis offer sacrifice to the gods; others sacrifice self itself in the fire of Brahman.

This is interpreted by Shankaracharya to mean that some perform sacrificial rites in order to gain their desired ends, while others sacrifice the self to the Self.

26

Some yogis offer hearing and the other senses in the fire of restraint; others offer sound and other sense objects in the fire of the senses.

The first half of this verse is clear: that some discipline their senses by constant control; the second half is usually taken to mean that some renounce the objects that might excite the senses.

27

Others again offer the activity of the senses and that of the vital force in the fire of sense-control kindled by wisdom.

28

Others there are who, under strict vows, sacrifice by means of their possessions, their austerities, their yoga, their learning and their knowledge.

That is to say that some sacrifice by renouncing their possessions, some by performing austerities, some by yogic disciplines, some by concentration on scriptural texts, and some by fixing the mind in a state of knowledge.

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29

Some offer the exhalation into the inhalation or the inhalation into the exhalation or restrain both inhalation and exhalation, concentrating on breath-control.

This refers to three techniques of breath-control.

30

Some, regulating their diet, offer the life-breath into the life-breath. All these understand the meaning of sacrifice and expiate their sins by it.

31

Those who eat the sacred remnants after sacrifice attain to the Eternal Brahman. (Success in) this world is not for those who make no sacrifice, how much less in another world, O Best of the Kurus.

In this verse the term 'sacrifice' must have had the meaning 'ritualistic burnt offering' at the time when the Gita was proclaimed, but it also had then and still has the meaning of restraint and giving up. The 'sacred remnants after sacrifice' can be taken not only literally but also symbolically as the legitimate activity that remains when practising self control. The reference to success in this world has the two-fold meaning that only dedicated activity succeeds and that only he who can subordinate lesser to greater purposes succeeds.

32

Thus many forms of sacrifice are expounded in the Scriptures. Know that all of them derive from activity. Knowing this you shall attain Liberation.

33

Greater than all material sacrifice is the sacrifice through wisdom, O Scourge of the Foe. All activity without exception, O Son of Pritha, culminates in wisdom.

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34

Gain this knowledge by bowing down (to your Guru), by questioning him and by serving him. The wise who have realized the Truth will teach you knowledge.

35

Know this and you will never fall thus into confusion, O Son of Pandu; through this (Knowledge) you will see all beings in the Self and also in Me.

This indicates a two-fold mode of comprehension, nontheistic and theistic: to see all beings in the Self and in God.

36

Even were you the greatest of sinners, yet should you cross over all evil on this raft of knowledge.

37

As a well lit fire consumes its fuel, Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all activity to ashes.

38

There is nothing in the world so purifying as knowledge. One who is well grounded in yoga discovers this in course of time, in himself for himself.

39

One who has faith and concentration and has subdued his senses attains knowledge. Having gained knowledge he speedily attains Supreme Peace.

40

But one who is in a state of ignorance, lacking faith and doubting, perishes. Neither this world nor that beyond falls to the doubter; nor does happiness.

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'Ignorance' here does not mean mere lack of information. It is ajnana, the negation of jnana (for which see the note to v. 10). By faith and concentration certitude can be attained, as stated in the previous verse; but one who lacks both certitude and faith is left with no boat to cross the flood, swept hither and thither by doubts and sense attractions.

41

He who has surrendered activity through yoga, who has destroyed doubts by certitude and who is self-possessed, O Wealth-Winner, is not bound by (the) actions (he performs).

42

Therefore with the sword of knowledge cut down this doubt born of ignorance that dwells in your heart, stand firm in yoga and rise up, O Bharata.

Here ends the Fourth Chapter entitled

The Yoga of Knowledge

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CHAPTER FIVE

1

Arjuna said:

You praise renunciation of action, O Krishna, but also the yoga (of action). Tell me clearly which is the better.

2

Sri Bhagavan said:

Right renunciation of action and right performance of action both lead to the goal, but of the two right performance is the better.

Here Arjuna returns to the question he asked at the beginning of Chapter III. The word 'sankhya,' used there, meant 'knowledge' and the word 'sannyasa,' used here, 'renunciation,' but both are contrasted with 'yoga,' here meaning 'the path of action,' so the meaning is the same.

3

He is to be considered a perpetual sannyasi who neither hates nor desires, O Mighty-Armed. Being free from the pairs of opposites, he is easily released from bondage.

4

It is child's talk, not the view of the wise, that the paths of knowledge (sankhya) and action (yoga) differ. He who is firmly established in one obtains the fruits of both.

Thus Krishna applies the term 'sannyasi' to the man of inner detachment, not to the wearer of the ochre robe who has renounced the world outwardly.

5

The same state which men of knowledge attain is attained also by those who perform right action. He who sees the two paths as one, he it is who sees aright.

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6

But it is difficult to attain to renunciation, O Mighty-Armed, without the yoga of action. A wise man who practises the yoga of action soon attains to Brahman.

7

He whose mind is purified by that yoga, who controls himself and is master of his senses, and who knows his self to be one with the Self of all, is unaffected even though engaged in action.

8, 9

He who knows the truth does not consider that it is he that is doing anything while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping, breathing, speaking, excreting, receiving, or opening and closing his eyes; he considers only that the senses are contacting the objects of the senses.

10

He who, relinquishing attachment, resigns his actions to Brahman, remains untouched by sin, like a lotus leaf by water.

The waxy surface of the lotus leaf keeps it dry, although growing in water.

11

Renouncing attachment, yogis engage in activity with the body, the mind (manas) the intellect (buddhi), or simply the sense organs, for the sake of purification.

The word ' yogi ' here means a follower of the path of action.

12

He who is integrated in Union (yuktah) attains abiding Peace relinquishing attachment to the fruits of action, while the nonintegrated (ayuktah) is bound by attachment to the fruits through desire.

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13

The self-controlled one who has mentally renounced all activity dwells peacefully in the city of the nine gates (the body), neither acting nor causing to act.

14

The Supreme Self (Prabhu) creates neither agency nor action for people, nor unites action with its fruit; it is one's own nature (svabhava) which does so.

15

The Universal Self (Vibuh) takes over neither the evil nor the good of any man. Wisdom (jnana) is veiled by unwisdom (ajnana); thereby are men deluded.

16

But in those whose unwisdom is destroyed by wisdom, that wisdom, like the sun, reveals the Supreme (Param).

17

Mind fixed on That, self merged in That, directed and devoted to That, their sins dissolved by widsom, they go whence there is no return.

18

The wise (panditah) see with an equal eye a learned and modest Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcast.

19

Even in this life those whose mind is equipoised have overcome phenomenal existence (sarga). Flawless and uniform is Brahman; hence in Brahman are they established.

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20

The knower of Brahman, established in Brahman, steadfast and clear of mind, neither exults over a pleasant event nor grieves over an unpleasant.

21

Unattached to outer contacts, he finds happiness in Self; united with Brahman, he enjoys eternal bliss.

22

The pleasures of the senses are sources of misery, O Son of Kunti, being ephemeral. A wise man (budhah) does not delight in them.

23

He who, even before being set free from the body, can resist the force of desire and anger is in a state of integration (yuktah); such a one is happy.

24

That yogi whose happiness is inward, whose joy and whose light are inward, attains Brahma-Nirvana and becomes Brahman.

25

Those Sages (Rishis) attain Brahma-Nirvana whose imperfections are destroyed, their sense of duality turn aside, their minds controlled, and who seek the well being of all creatures.

26

Brahma-Nirvana lies around those who have freed themselves from anger and desire, who have subdued their minds and have known the Self.

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27, 28

The Sage (Muni) who, intent on Liberation (Moksha), has overcome desire, fear and anger, who turns away from outer things and sits with gaze fixed between the eyebrows and with out-going and in-coming breath made equal in the nostrils, is for ever free.

29

Knowing Me as the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities, the Great Lord of all the worlds, the Friend of all beings, he attains Peace.

The previous 5 verses describe the attainment of Liberation through self-control and imperturbability; verse 29 adds also the element of devotion. Knowing God as the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities means performing them not as a mere formal discipline but as a mode of surrender of the individual to the Universal. That is what makes them effective.

Here ends the Fifth Chapter entitled
The Yoga of the Renunciation of Action.

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CHAPTER SIX

1

He it is who is a sannyasi, he it is who is a yogi, who performs his duty without regard to profit; not he who renounces the sacred fire and activity (of a householder).

2

Know that which is called renunciation to be in fact Yoga, O Son of Pandu, for none becomes a yogi without renouncing sankalpa.

Sankalpa, a word frequently used in this chapter, is wider in its meaning than desire; it is any mental preoccuption and may be ambition, projects or imagination.

3

For the wise (Muni) aspirant to Yoga, action is said to be the way; after he has attained, stillness is said to be the way.

Shankara interprets *shamah* (here rendered 'stillness') as 'cessation of all activity,' quoting a passage from the Mahabharata. Tilak takes it to be 'serenity' and calls it 'the means' (of continued action).

4

When a man is attached neither to sense objects nor to actions but has renounced all sankalpa he is said to have attained Yoga.

5

Let a man raise himself; let him not debase himself; for he himself is his friend, he himself his foe.

The Sanskrit word 'atma,' like the English 'self,' can mean either the Supreme Self (Paramatma) or the individual self (jivatma). It is used in this verse and the next without either prefix.

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6

To him who has subdued the self by the Self, the Self is the friend, but to him of uncontrolled self the Self remains hostile, like an enemy.

7

In one who is self-controlled and serene the Self remains equipoised in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, even in honour and dishonour.

8

That yogi is said to be integrated who is content with knowledge and wisdom, unshaken and master of his senses, and to whom a clod, a stone and a piece of gold are the same.

9

Pre-eminent is he who looks with equal eye on the well-disposed, the friend and foe, the neutral and indifferent, the estranged and related, the righteous and unrighteous.

10

Sitting alone, in solitude, the yogi should meditate with body and mind controlled, free from desire and possessiveness.

Up to here, whenever the word 'yoga' has been used in the Gita to denote a particular path, it has been the path of disinterested activity, what would today be called 'karma-marga.' In this and the following verses it is used for the first time to denote the type of path which is today called 'yoga.'

11

He should assume a firm posture (asana) in a clean place, neither too high nor too low, on kusha grass covered with a deerskin and a cloth.

Kusha is a sacred grass. A deerskin is used because, being a non-conductor, it prevents the electric currents generated in the body from escaping into the ground.

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12

Seated there, with concentrated mind, thoughts and senses under control, he should practise yoga to purify himself.

13

With body, head and neck erect, motionless, gazing at the tip of his nose and not looking about.

14

Serene and fearless let him sit, firm in his vow of celibacy, with mind controlled and turned to Me, integrated and intent on Me alone.

15

Thus, ever at one, the yogi of controlled mind attains to the supreme peace of Nirvana, which is in Me.

16

Yoga is not for one who eats too much or fasts too much, Arjuna, nor for one who sleeps too much or wakes too much;

17

But for one who is a yogi in his eating and recreation, a yogi in his activities, a yogi in his sleeping and his waking, Yoga becomes the destroyer of suffering.

In this verse the adjective 'yuktah,' derived from the same root as 'yoga,' is taken by most translators to mean 'moderate.' Prof. Kulkarni explains in a note given at the end of the chapter why he prefers to take it as meaning 'in a yogic manner.'

18

When the perfectly controlled mind rests in the Self alone, free from all desires, then is one said to be integrated (yuktah).

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19

To a lamp in a windless place, which does not flicker, is compared a yogi of concentrated mind, meditating on the Self.

20

When the mind, disciplined by yogic practice, attains quietude and when, seeing the Self through the self, one is content with the Self,

21

When one knows that infinite bliss which can be grasped by the intellect (buddhi) but is beyond the senses and, established in it, never stirs from Truth,

Or 'from Reality'; the same Sanskrit word can be translated as either. Only Reality is true; only Truth is real.

22

Which having attained, one conceives of no higher gain; in which established, one is not moved even by great grief,

23

Then can one know that this severence (viyoga) from union with suffering is called 'Union' (Yoga). In this Yoga should one persevere with undesponding mind.

24, 25

Giving up every single desire born of sankalpa and completely restraining the sense organs by the mind from every outlet, one should gradually, gradually, attain quietude with the intellect (buddhi) held steadfast and the mind sunk in the Self, allowing no thought to arise.

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26

To whatever side the restless, unsteady mind wanders away, one should check it and bring it back controlled to the Self.

27

To such a yogi as this, tranquil in mind, passion-free, sinless and one with Brahman, comes supreme Bliss.

28

Thus engaging constantly in yoga and free from sin, the yogi easily attains the infinite Bliss of contact with Brahman.

29

One who is thus integrated in yoga (yoga yuktatma) sees all with equal eye, seeing himself in all beings and all beings in himself.

Or 'the Self': see the note to verse 5.

30

One who sees me everywhere and sees all in Me, I shall not be lost to him, nor he to Me.

31

That Yogi who, established in Oneness, worships Me in all beings dwells in Me, though active in all ways.

32

He who looks everywhere with equal eye, Arjuna, and regards the pleasure and pain of others as his own is considered a perfect Yogi.

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33

Arjuna said:

This yoga of equanimity which you teach, O Slayer of Madhu, seems to me to have no firm endurance, owing to restlessness (of the mind).

34

For the mind, O Krishna, is restless, turbulent, strong and obstinate. As hard it is to control, I believe, as the wind.

35

Sri Bhagavan said:

Undoubtedly, O Mighty-Armed, the mind is hard to control and restless, but by practice and dispassion (vairagya) it can be controlled, O Son of Kunti.

36

For one who cannot control himself, Yoga is hard to master, I admit; but for the self-controlled there are ways to master it.

37

Arjuna said:

(Tell me) Krishna, what fate does he meet who has faith but lacks control and whose mind wanders away without attaining perfection in Yoga?

38

Fallen from both (worlds), does he not perish like a split cloud, O Mighty-Armed, unsupported and lost on the way of Brahman?

39

Dispel this doubt of mine completely, O Krishna for there is none other can dispel it.

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This question, with Krishna's reply, is one of the most cherished passages in the Gita, providing hope, as it does, for those who fail in this lifetime.

40

Sri Bhagavan replied:

Neither in this world nor the next does he face destruction, O Partha; never, my son, does one of right action come to grief.

41

Having attained the heavens of the righteous and dwelt there countless years, he who fell from yoga is born again in a pure and prosperous family.

'Loka,' translated here as 'heavens,' means world, place, state or heaven, as Brahmaloka is the heaven of Brahma. 'Countless years' refers to the heavenly eternity which intervenes between one earth-life and another. Since the physical time-scale cannot apply to non-physical worlds, this has no bearing on the question at what date the causally 'next' physical reincarnation will take place.

42

Or he is born in a family of wise yogis. Such a birth is indeed very hard to obtain in this world.

43

There, O Son of the Kurus, he regains the yogic understanding he had acquired in his former body and strives more than then for perfection.

44

He is carried forward even involuntarily by his former practice. Even he who merely aspires to Yoga goes beyond the scriptures.

'Even involuntarily'——this explains the many cases of people who develop yogic powers and perceptions or true aspirations unguided in this

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lifetime. In the next sentence, the word 'yoga' is used to mean Union. Even the aspiration for Divine Union goes beyond the exoteric or dualistic scriptures.

45

And the Yogi who strives earnestly, purified from sin and perfected through many births, at last reaches the Supreme Goal.

46

A Yogi is superior to a man of austerity; he is considered superior even to a man of knowledge; superior is he to a man of action. Be therefore a Yogi, Arjuna.

Such comparisons between the paths are to be taken with caution, since whatever path is being described is apt to be extolled. A Yogi, as described in vv 10—15, is in fact a man of austerity (tapas); so it can be taken to mean that one who has attained Union (Yoga) is superior to one who is still striving. A 'man of knowledge' is usually taken here to mean one of mental or scriptural knowledge. A man of action is taken to mean a ritualist. It is to be noted that Arjuna is a married man and is being exhorted by Krishna to fight a battle which, if victorious, will make him a ruler; so it is clearly not meant that he should go and sit in a forest doing yogic exercise. It is best to take 'Yogi' in this whole verse as meaning 'one who has attained Union.'

47

And of all yogis I deem him the most complete (yuktatma) whose inner being is merged in Me and who worships Me with full faith.

Here pre-eminence seems to be given to bhakti; however some commentators take the 'Me' to mean not the personal God but the Universal Self.

Here ends the Sixth Chapter entitled
The Yoga of Meditation

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A Note on Ch. VI, v. 17 of the Bhagavad Gita

By Prof. G. V. Kulkarni

The verse runs:

yuktaharaviharasya
yuktacestasya karmasu
yuktasvapnavabodhasya
yogo bhavati duhkhaha

Almost all commentators have taken the word 'yukta' in it to mean "controlled' or 'moderate.' I propose the following alternative interpretation: "For one who eats and moves about in the manner of a yogi (yukta), who performs actions in the manner of a yogi, who sleeps and stays awake in the manner of a yogi, yoga becomes the annihilator of misery."

Thus the word 'yukta' is not taken to mean 'controlled' or "moderate' but 'yogic.' The next verse explains the word thus:

'When the perfectly controlled mind rests in the Self alone, free from all desires, then one is said to be integrated (yukta).'

It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the word is used in this sense in the previous verse. It is a practice of the Gita to explain a word occurring in the previous verse. For instance, in this very chapter the word 'yogarudha' occurs in verse 3 and is explained in verse 4. Hence it is quite natural to take verse 18 in reference to verse 17 and explain it in this way.

This interpretation is more meaningful because it refers not only to the quantity of eating, moving about, acting, sleeping and waking but also to the yogic quality or art of doing so. A Yogi, in the sense given to the word by the Gita, performs all these actions with equanimity, detached alike from the action and its result, without any ego-sense and hence free from sorrow. As stated in verse 18, his mind is absorbed in his Self and he is free from all desires.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

1

Sri Bhagavan said:

Hear, O Son of Pritha, how, with mind attached to Me, taking refuge in Me, and practising Yoga, you shall surely know Me in full.

Samagram—in full—is taken traditionally to imply the Divine Attributes as well as the Essence.

2

I will fully expound to you both the essential and the detailed knowledge, having acquired which nothing more remains to be known.

'Jnana' is taken to mean integral or essential knowledge and 'vijnana' detailed or analytical knowledge.

3

Out of thousands, perhaps one strives for perfection; out of those who strive, perhaps one knows Me as I am.

A hard verse. "Many are called but few are chosen." Many more are not even called.

4

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind (manas), intellect (buddhi) and ego-sense (ahankara), these are the eightfold division of my Prakriti.

'Prakriti' means 'Nature' in the sense of 'substance' or 'manifestation' as distinct from 'Essence.' Further on, in Chapter XIII, it is spoken of as 'kshetra,' the field.

5

This is my lower Prakriti, O Mighty-Armed. Know My higher Prakriti, to be the life-principle by which the world is upheld.

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Further on, in Chapter XIII, this is spoken of as the 'knower of the field.' It will be noted that the 'Lower Prakriti' while far from being 'matter' is akin to the universal energy-field of the nuclear scientist, the substance of the universe.

6

Know that all creatures are born of this (dual Prakriti), I am the origin of the whole universe and also its dissolution.

Krishna, the Purusha, the Essence or Spirit, produces the entire universe by means of the dual Prakriti and dissolves it again.

7

There is nothing higher than Me, O Wealth-Winner. All this is strung on Me, like beads on a string.

8

I am the savour of water, O Son of Kunti, the effulgence of moon and sun, the syllable OM in all the Vedas, sound in space and vigour in men.

That is to say the Essence in all substance.

9

I am the holy fragrance of the earth and the glow of fire; I am the vitality in all beings and the austerity in ascetics.

10

Know Me, O Son of Pritha, as the eternal seed of all beings, the intelligence of the wise, the lustre of the illustrious.

11

The strength of the strong am I, when this is free from desire and attachment. I am desire unopposed to dharma, O Lord of the Bharatas.

'Kama' is interpreted by Shankara as desire for things not yet obtained and 'raga' as clinging to those obtained. 'Desire unopposed to dharma' is the desire for what is legitimate.

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12

And whatever states arise from the gunas, sattvic, rajasic or tamasic, know that they are from Me. However, I am not in them but they in Me.

The gunas are the tendencies, stresses or forces whose interplay sustains the universe:

sattva—pure, white, upward-tending,
rajas—active, red, outward-tending,
tamas—inert, black, downward-tending.

For a detailed account of them see Chapter XVII.

"I am not in them but they in Me." Here Krishna speaks as the Transcendent. God is immanent in all but is not contained in all or any.

13

The whole world, deluded by these three conditions arising from the gunas, is ignorant of Me, Who am Transcendent and Immutable.

14

This My Divine Maya is indeed hard to cross. Those only who surrender to Me cross over this Maya.

15

Wrong-doers, the lowest of men, whose minds are deluded by Maya and who have acquired the nature of demons; these seek Me not.

16

Of four kinds are the righteous who worship Me, Arjuna: those who suffer, those who seek knowledge, those who seek profit, and the wise, O Lord of the Bharatas.

Thus are seekers after God divided into four categories. The highest are the wise, who have no motive. Next come those who seek wisdom. The other two categories are those who seek some worldly gain or advantage and those who turn away from the world on account of grief or suffering.

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17

The foremost of these is the Wise man (Jnani) who is ever steadfast and devoted to the One. Very dear am I to the Wise-man, and he to Me.

18

Indeed, all these are noble, but I regard the Sage as My very Self. With integrated mind he is established in Me alone, the Supreme Goal.

19

At the end of many births the man of wisdom comes to Me, realising that Vasudeva is all. Such a great soul is very rare to find.

Vasudeva is a name of Krishna's. This can also be rendered: "realizing that all is Vasudeva."

20

But those whose Knowledge is clouded by various desires resort to other gods, practicing diverse rites, as constrained by their own nature.

It is not a question of worshipping one or another god, but of seeking Liberation in the Supreme or fulfilment of various wishes through partial manifestations of God.

Knowledge is spoken of as the natural state of man, clouded over by desires.

21

Whatever form any devotee wishes to worship with faith, that faith of his do I strengthen.

22

With faith strengthened, he engages in worship and obtains his desires from that form, as ordained by Me alone.

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23

But limited is the reward of these men of little understanding. Worshippers of the gods go to the gods; My devotees come to Me.

Their limited understanding causes them to seek a limited goal and their rewards are proportionate.

24

The unintelligent consider Me, the Formless, to have form, ignorant of My Transcendent State, immutable and supreme.

Similarly Ramana Maharshi would say: "It is only you who say that the Jnani has a body. He does not say so."

25

Veiled by My yogic power (yogamaya), I am not revealed to all; this deluded world does not recognize Me as unborn and deathless.

26

I know the beings of the past, the present and the future, Arjuna, but none knows Me.

27

All creatures are subject from birth, O Bharata, to delusion caused by the polarities arising from desire and aversion, O Vanquisher of Foes.

28

Only men of right conduct whose sins have come to an end are free from the delusion of the polarities and worship Me, steadfast in their vows.

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29

Those who, taking refuge in Me, strive for deliverance from old age and death fully know the Brahman, the Self, and all manner of karma.

30

Those who know Me as comprising both the physical and divine aspects and all sacrifice realize Me with integrated mind even at the time of death.

Here ends the Seventh Chapter entitled
The Yoga of Wisdom and Knowledge

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CHAPTER EIGHT

1

Arjuna asked:

What is Brahman? What is the self of man? What is karma, O Supreme Being? What is the reality of the world and what the reality of heaven?

This and the following verses are hard to translate on account of their technical terminology. *Purushothama*, the emphatic form of *Purusha*, meaning "male person" or "the Spirit" (in contradistinction to "Prakriti" meaning "Substance" or "Primordial Nature") we have translated "Supreme Being."

2

What is the meaning and manner of sacrifice in this body, O Slayer of Madhu? And how are You to be realized at the time of death by the self-controlled?

3

Sri Bhagavan replied:

Brahman is the Imperishable (akshara) Supreme (parama). One's own nature (svabhava) is said to be the self of man (adhyatma). Karma is the name given to the force which creates beings.

4

Perishable (kshara) nature (bhava) is the reality of the world (adhibhuta) and Purusha (the Cosmic Being) the reality of heaven. The basis of sacrifice in the body am I, O Best of the Embodied.

5

Whoever at the time of death dwells on Me alone while giving up the body, he attains to Me. Of this there is no doubt.

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6

And whatever the mind dwells on at the end while giving up the body, O Son of Kunti, that does one become, being absorbed in it.

Hence the importance attached in all religions to the state of mind in which a man dies. Ramana Maharshi warned, however, that it is no use leaving it till death, because if the mind has not already been brought under control it will rise up uncontrollably at death. This explains the need for the next verse.

7

Therefore at all times remember Me and fight. Your mind (manas) and understanding (buddhi) surrendered to Me, to Me shall you surely come.

8

He who holds his mind unwaveringly to this yoga of constant practice comes to the Supreme (parama) Divine (divya) Being (Purusha), O Son of Pritha.

9, 10

He who, at the time of death, centres his life-force between the eyebrows, with a firm mind endued with devotion and the power of yoga, and remembers Me, the Sage, the Ancient, the Ruler, Smaller than the smallest yet Supporter of all, Inconceivable of form, Effulgent as the Sun, Transcending darkness (of tamas), he attains that Supreme Divine Person.

11

I will briefly describe to you that state which knowers of the Vedas call eternal (akshara), which passion-free Sages enter, and in quest of which men observe celibacy (brahmacharya).

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12, 13

He who, at the time of leaving the body, closes all the gateways of the senses, fixing his mind in his heart and his life-breath in his head and, remembering Me, utters the Divine Monosyllable OM, he attains the Supreme State.

14

To him who dwells constantly on Me alone in fixed attention I am readily accessible, O Son of Pritha.

15

Having attained to Me, the Great Ones (Mahatmas) do not return to birth, which is the domain of suffering and impermanence, for they have entered the Supreme State.

16

From Brahmaloka downwards, all worlds involve rebirth, Arjuna; but on attaining to Me, O Son of Kunti, there is no return to birth.

17

Knowers of Day and Night know that a thousand ages make up the Day of Brahma and a thousand ages His Night.

The word used here for "age" is yuga, but it is not, used to mean one of the four sections of a manvantara, as in the term "kali-yuga." The Day and Night of Brahma are the alternate phase of manifestation and dissolution of the universe. "Brahma" here means "God the Creator," not 'Brahman, the Absolute.' As Ramana Maharshi said, "Brahmaloka is the highest of the heavens but still subject to dissolution at the end of a Day of Brahma, so that one who abides in it is brought back to rebirth, whereas, as Sri Krishna says, in verse 15, one who has attained to Self-realization, which he there calls "the Supreme State" has no more return to birth.

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18

At the dawning of that Day all things stream forth from the Unmanifest, and at the coming on of Night they sink back into that same Unmanifest.

19

After repeated births, this same multitude of beings merge helpless again at the approach of Night, O Son of Pritha, and they issue forth at the dawn of Day.

20

But beyond this Unmanifest is another, the Eternal Unmanifest, which perishes not when all things perish.

The alteration of Day and Night, manifestation and dissolution, is on the background of this Supreme Unmanifest which is unaffected by either.

21

This Supreme State is called the Unmanifest Imperishable (avyakta akshara). That is My highest abode. For those who attain to it there is no return.

22

This Supreme Being (Parah-Purusha), O Son of Pritha, in Whom all beings are and Who permeates all this, is attainable by single-minded devotion.

23

Now I will tell you, O Best of the Bharatas, at what times yogis departing return again, and at what times they do not return.

24

Knowers of Brahman departing hence by fire, by light, by daytime, in the bright fortnight of the moon and the ascending course of the sun, attain to Brahman.

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The bright fortnight is from new moon to full, and the ascending course of the sun from the winter to the summer solstice.

25

Yogis who go forth by smoke, by night, in the dark fortnight and in the declining course of the sun pass hence to the light of the moon and return again.

The path described in verse 24 is known as devayana, "the path of the gods," and that in verse 25 as pitriyana, "the path of the ancestors." From the former there is no return to birth, from the latter there is.

26

These two paths, the light and the dark, are held to be eternal. By the one a man goes forth not to return again; by the latter he returns.

27

The yogi who knows these two paths, O Son of Pritha, is never deluded. Therefore, Arjuna, remain ever firm in yoga.

28

The Yogi who knows all this transcends the rewards of merits accruing from Vedic study, sacrifice, austerity and charity and attains the Supreme Primal Abode.

Here ends the Eighth Chapter entitled
The Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman

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CHAPTER NINE

1

Sri Bhagavan said:

To you who are without envy I will now declare the great secret of knowledge combined with wisdom, by knowing which you will be free from evil.

2

This is the sovereign science, the sovereign mystery, of great sanctity, accessible to direct experience, consistent with dharma, very easy to practise and imperishable.

3

Those who lack faith in this dharma, O Scourge of the Foe, do not attain to Me but return to the mortal round of samsara.

'Samsara' is the course of mortal life but the word has overtones of suffering, privation and struggle which no English word can render.

4

By Me in My Unmanifest Aspect the entire universe is pervaded. All beings exist in Me, but I am not contained in them.

The Unmanifest pervades all manifestation and contains it but cannot be contained in it.

5

And yet beings do not exist in Me. Behold My Divine Power, My Self, creating and supporting all beings does not abide in them.

And yet beings do not exist in Purusha, the pure Spirit, but in Prakriti, His Nature, while He remains aloof. The word translated here as 'Power' is 'Yoga' the word translated as 'Self' 'Atma.' The Divine Power or Union, not other than God, creates and sustains all that appears to be other.

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In this chapter statements are carefully qualified and apparently contradicted to safeguard against partial and therefore faulty understanding. See also, in this connection, verses 8, 9 and 10.

6

Understand that just as the mighty wind, though moving, everywhere, dwells in space, so do all beings dwell in Me.

That is, as the wind moves in space without affecting space. 'Akasha' means either 'space' or 'ether.'

7

All beings, O Son of Kunti, return to My Prakriti at the end of a kalpa; at the beginning of the next kalpa I send them forth again.

This has already been said in Ch. VIII, v. 16, where the possibility of avoiding a return to samsara is also mentioned.

A kalpa is a great cycle containing fourteen manvantaras. A kalpa is 'one day of Brahma' followed by pralaya or dissolution, which is a 'night of Brahma.'

8

Resorting to My Prakriti, I send forth again and again this whole multitude of beings, helpless in her power.

9

Nor do these actions bind Me, O Wealth-Winner; I remain unattached to them, like one they do not concern.

10

Under My mere regard Prakriti produces all things, both the moving and the unmoving. On this account, O Son of Kunti, the world revolves.

11

The foolish disregard Me clad in human form, not knowing My higher state as Supreme Lord of beings.

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12

Of vain hopes, vain actions and vain knowledge, these senseless people are endued with the deceptive nature of rakshasas and asuras.

Rakshasas are equivalent to the ogres of Western mythology; they are powerful and menacing and attack and devour men but can be killed by them. The asuras, characterised rather by greed and stupidity, are the enemies of the Devas or gods (for which see v. 20) and can best be translated 'demons.'

13

But the great souls, O Son of Pritha, those of divine nature, worship Me with undivided mind as the Imperishable Source of beings.

14

Ever glorifying Me, striving and firm in vows, prostrating before Me with devotion, they worship Me, ever steadfast.

15

Others again, with knowledge as their mode of sacrifice, worship Me in various ways, as the One, as the Other, as the Omnipresent.

This verse has been variously interpreted. It seems to refer to worship of the Lord as the Self, as other than the worshipper and as All-encompassing.

16

I am the ritual, I the sacrifice, I the offering to the ancestors, I the herbs, I the mantra, I also the ghee, I the fire and I the offering.

17

I am the Father of this world, the Mother, the Provider and the Ancestor; I am That which is to be known, I the

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Purifier, the chanting of OM, the Rigveda, the Sama and the Yajur.

Only the first three Vedas are mentioned; the fourth, the Atharva, is not regarded as of the same sanctity. See also v. 20.

18

I am the Goal, the Supporter, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, the Refuge, the Friend, the Origin, the Dissolution, the Foundation, the Treasure-House and the Imperishable Seed.

19

I give heat, I withhold and send down rain, I am both immortality and death, both being and non-being, Arjuna.

20

The knowers of the three Vedas, drinking soma and purified from sin, worship Me with sacrifice and pray for the attainment of heaven. On coming to the holy world of the Lord of Devas they enjoy in heaven the celestial delights of the devas.

Soma is said to have been the intoxicating or halucinogenic juice of a plant. Its use in contexts like the present shows that it is also a symbol of divine ecstasy.

It seems better to keep the word 'devas' than to translate it as 'gods.' The Supreme may be approached from one angle or another and referred to by various names— as Brahman or Atma or Bhagavan or Siva or Vishnu — but never as plural. The devas are divine beings who are immortal for the duration of the kalpa — *ad saecula saeculorum* — but, as explained in Chapter VIII, vv. 16-19, at the end of the kalpa they are absorbed in the universal dissolution (pralaya or Night of Brahman), to be manifested forth again at the dawning of the new kalpa.

The Lord of the Devas is Indra.

Those who desire heaven still have an ego that desires; therefore, as explained in the next verse, when the rewards of their merits are exhausted, they must return to strive again, since it is only in this world

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that spiritual progress can be made and the ego dissolved. This is explained also in Ch. VI, vv. 41-42.

The possibility of going beyond the heavens and avoiding return to samsara by complete surrender of the ego is explained again in the present chapter, as it has been in Chapters II, VI and VIII.

21

Having enjoyed the vast realm of heaven, they return, on the exhaustion of their merit, to the world of mortals. Following the dharma of the three Vedas, they entertain desires and are subject to going and returning.

22

To those, however, who dwell on Me in single-minded worship I guarantee fulfilment of needs and security.

23

Even devotees of other gods who worship them with faith really worship Me, O Son of Kunti, though not in the right way.

One who turns to higher powers turns to the Self, though indirectly. In verses like this and the following it is more evident than elsewhere that the 'I' and 'Me' must be understood as universal.

24

For I alone am the Enjoyer and Master of all sacrifices; but they do not rightly know Me, and so they fall.

25

Worshippers of the devas go to the devas; of the ancestors to the ancestors, of spirits to the spirits; My worshippers come to Me.

26

Whoever offers Me a leaf, a flower, or fruit or water with devotion, that I accept when it is offered devoutly by the pure of heart.

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27

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever tapas (austerity) you perform, do it as an offering to Me, O Son of Kunti.

28

Thus will you be set free from the bondage of karma with its good and ill effects and, with mind established in the Yoga of renunciation, will come Liberated to Me.

29

I am alike in all beings. None is hateful to Me and none dear. But those who worship Me with devotion abide in Me and I in them.

As was said in the note on v. 5, difficult or contradictory statements abound in this chapter. They have to be understood. Being is the same in all beings; but by understanding and devotion a being can participate consciously in Being.

30

Even a most vicious person who worships Me whole-heartedly must be accounted righteous, for he has rightly resolved.

31

He soon becomes right-minded and attains eternal peace. Know, O Son of Kunti, that My devotee never perishes.

32

If they take refuge in Me, O Son of Pritha, even those of low birth, women, Vaishyas, even Shudras, attain the Supreme Goal.

Vaishyas and Shudras are the third and fourth respectively of the traditional four varnas or social orders.

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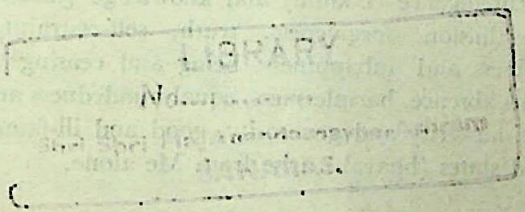
33

How much more, then, holy Brahmins and devoted royal Sages. Having come to this transient, sorrowful world, worship Me then.

34

With mind set on Me, be My devotee, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me alone. Thus harmonised in yourself, with Me as your Supreme Goal, to Me alone shall you come.

Here ends the Ninth Chapter entitled
The Yoga of Sovereign Knowledge and
Sovereign Mystery



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CHAPTER TEN

1

Again, O Mighty-Armed, hear My supreme word, which I will pronounce for your welfare since you love me.

2

Neither the hosts of the gods (devas) nor the Great Sages (maharshis) know My origin, for I am in all ways the source of the gods and the Great Sages.

3

He who knows Me as unborn, beginningless and Supreme Lord of the worlds is undeluded among mortals and free from all sins.

4—5

Intelligence (buddhi) and knowledge (jnana), freedom from illusion, forgiveness, truth, self-restraint, serenity, happiness and unhappiness, being and ceasing to be, fear and its absence, harmlessness, equal-mindedness and contentment, austerity and generosity, good and ill-fame, all these varied states (bhavah) arise from Me alone.

6

The Seven Great Rishis (Maharshis) and the Four ancient Manus are of My nature (bhavah) emanated from My mind; and from them are these creatures of the world.

According to the doctrine of the yugas referred to especially in Chapters IV and VIII, there are successive ages of mankind, each running its own course. The Maharshis are those who enunciate the Eternal Doctrine for a new age, the Manus those who establish its social order.

The word 'ancient' may be taken to apply to either the Maharshis or the Manus.

The Seven Maharshis are usually taken to be: Brighu, Marichi, Atri, Pulastya, Pulah, Krathu and Vasishta. The Four Manus are Swayambhuva, Swarochisha, Uttama, Raivata.

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However, this doctrine goes far beyond the domain of history. The 'Seven Rishis' are incarnations of Cosmic Being and therefore 'of My nature.' They are said to represent the seven planes of consciousness, while the 'Four Manus' are guardians of cosmic order and stability.

7

He who truly knows these manifestations (vibhuti) of Me and My Power (Yoga) is established unshakeably in yoga; of this there is no doubt.

8

Knowing Me to be the Source of all and all to emanate from Me, the wise worship Me with understanding.

9

With mind and life-breath turned to me, they instruct one another about me and, speaking constantly of Me, they are contented and rejoice.

10

To them, ever steadfast in loving worship, I give the yoga of understanding by which they attain to Me.

11

Out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their heart, destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the effulgent light of knowledge.

The words rendered "dwelling in their heart" could also mean "abiding in My true state."

12

Arjuna said:

You are the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Abode, the Supreme Purifier, the Eternal, Divine Purusha, the Primeval God, Unborn and All-pervading.

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13

All the sages have acclaimed you, as also the Divine Sage (Deva Rishi) Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyasa have too, and now You Yourself declare it to me.

Narada was a Sage among the gods and is regarded as the author of the "Bhakti-Sutras," Vyasa is the compiler of the Vedas and the author of the Mahabharata, the Brahma-Sutras and the Puranas. All that Arjuna has heard and believed by hearsay he now finds confirmed by Krishna himself.

14

I hold all this true that you say to me O Kesava, Neither the gods, nor the demons know your manifestation, Bhagavan.

The microcosmic interpretation also is to be kept in mind—that neither the higher nor the lower tendencies in a man have knowledge of his true Self.

15

You alone know Yourself through Yourself, O Supreme Being, Creator and Lord of Beings, God of gods, Ruler of the world.

'Purusha' means 'the Spirit' or 'male person.' 'Purushothama' here translated 'Supreme Being,' could therefore be understood also as 'Divine Spirit' or 'Supreme Person.'

16

Describe to me fully, I pray, Your divine glories, by which You pervade these worlds while remaining (as You are).

17

How may I know You O Yogi, ceaselessly meditating on You? In what aspects may you be conceived by me, Bhagavan?

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18

Tell me again in detail Your Power (yoga) and Glories (vibhuti) O Janardana. I can never have enough of listening to your life-giving words.

19

Sri Bhagavan said:

Certainly I will tell you, O Prince of the Kurus, but not in full, for there is no end to it, only the most outstanding of divine glories.

20

I am the Self, O Gudakesa, dwelling in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning and the middle and the end of all beings.

Ramana Maharshi indicated this verse as the central and most important one in the entire Gita, Sri Shankara also said that the Atma dwelling in the heart is the first and foremost Aspect of God to be meditated on.

The following verses indicate that the most essential or characteristic of each species is to be regarded as the expression of divinity in it. If, for instance, flowers manifest a certain mode of God, the lotus in the East and the rose in the West epitomises this manifestation.

21

Of the Adityas I am Vishnu, of the luminaries I am the radiant Sun, of the winds (Maruts) I am Marichi, of the stellar forms I am the Moon.

The Sun personified as a God is called Aditya. Aditya is given twelve names, one for each of the solar months. Vishnu is the name for the January sun coming after the winter solstice, when the days begin to lengthen and the sun takes its course towards summer.

22

Among the Vedas I am the Sama, among the Devas Vasava, of the faculties I am the mind, and in beings I am consciousness.

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The Samaveda repeats hymns from the Rigveda, but with an added musical beauty. It is for this that it is singled out.

Vasava is another name for Indra, the king of the devas or gods.

23

Of the Rudras I am Shankara, of the yakshas and rakshasas Vittesha, of the Vasus Pavaka, and among mountains I am Mt. Meru.

Rudras are celestials whose function is to turn man Godward through grief and frustration. They are held to be eleven in number, one of them being Shankara. Both 'Rudra' and 'Shankara' are regarded as names for Siva.

Yakshas are intermediary and rakshasas infernal beings. Vittesha is the same as Kubera, the custodian of wealth.

The Vasus are eight in number, the five traditional elements plus sun, moon and stars thus constituting the structure of the physical universe. Pavaka is a name for Agni or fire.

Mt. Meru is the mythological mountain which is the centre and axis of the world.

24

Among priests know Me to be Brihaspati, the chief of them, O Son of Prithu, among generals Skanda and among waters the ocean.

Brihaspati is the priest of the devas. He is identified with the planet Jupiter and regarded as the arche-type of the Guru. Skanda (Subrahmanya) is the younger of the two sons of Siva and is represented in mythology as the commander-in-chief of the devas in their war with the demons or asuras (microcosmically, of the good with the evil tendencies in man). Many regarded Ramana Maharshi as an incarnation of Skanda.

25

Of the Maha-Rishis I am Brighu, of utterances I am the monosyllable (OM), among sacrifices I am the sacrifice of Japa, of immovable things I am the Himalaya.

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26

Out of all trees I am the Asvattha, of heavenly Rishis. Narada, of the Gandharvas Chitraratha and of the Perfected. (Siddhas) I am the Sage (Muni) Kapila.

The Asvattha, a species of wild fig tree, of the same family as the banyan tree, is sacred. It is the same as the bodhi-tree under which Buddha attained Enlightenment. If its seed falls in the dust in the fork of another tree it strikes its root down into the trunk of the other tree and grows and swells until it splits the host tree asunder and takes its place, which is compared to the seed of knowledge falling into the heart of a worldling.

For Narada see v. 13.

The Gandharvas were the celestial musicians. Among the six Hindu 'darshanas' or 'views' of doctrine, Kapila was the expounder of the Sankhya.

27.

Of horses, know that I am Ucchaisravas born of ambrosia. and of lordly elephants Airavata, while among men I am the king.

The white horse Ucchaisravas and the lordly elephant Airavata were two of the marvels that emerged at the churning of the ocean by the rotation of Mt. Mandara in it by devas and asuras. They both became the mounts of Indra. The churning of the ocean is the churning of a man's nature in the quest and the marvels symbolise the various powers that accrue.

28

Of weapons I am the thunderbolt, of cows Kamadhuk, of progenitors Kandarpa, of serpents Vasuki.

The vajra or thunderbolt is the weapon of Indra, the King of the gods, manufactured from the bones of a Sage who was willing to give his body for the purpose. All this is to be understood symbolically.

Kamadhuk, also called Kamadhenu, is the wish-fulfiling cow who was another of the wonders produced at the churning of the ocean. Kandarpa is another name for Kama, the God of Love.

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Vasuki, the Shakti or 'Serpent-Power,' the Kundalini, is the serpent who served as a rope for rotating Mt. Mandara in the ocean, to churn it up.

29

Of the hooded serpents I am Ananta, of the water-lords Varuna, of the ancestors Aryama, of the controllers Yama.

Ananta is an appellation of the serpent Sesha. The Lord reposes on him and therefore he represents 'Prakriti.' This is indicated by the name Ananta, which means literally 'endless,' also by his having a thousand heads.

Varuna (akin to the Greek Ouranos) represents the heavens. He is also Lord of the Waters.

Aryama is said to have been the first of the ancestors to have known death and therefore to be the chief of them.

Yama is the God of Death.

30

And among the Titans I am Prahlada, of reckoners I am Time, of beasts I am the lord of beasts and of birds Vinuta's son.

Among the Hindus, as among the Greeks and the Arabs and other peoples, there were legends of a race of great power and arrogance who defied the gods. It is to be presumed that their powers were of a subtle nature, not like the physical powers of modern scientists; but the arrogance and defiance were the same. Prahlada was the son of one of their kings and from childhood was a devotee of the Lord, for which he endured torture.

The lord of the beasts is the lion.

Vinuta's son is the Garuda, the mythological bird that serves as the mount of Vishnu.

31

Of purifiers I am the wind, of warriors Rama, of fishes the alligator, of rivers the Ganges.

All the five elements, ether, fire, water, air and earth, are regarded as purifiers, but among them the wind is all-pervading.

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It is not so much for his prowess as for his dharma that Rama is regarded as the perfect warrior. Also, since he too, like Krishna, was an Avatar of Vishnu, they can be said to be identical.

The word 'makara' is variously translated as 'shark' and alligator.

Jahnavi is a mythological name for the Ganges.

32

I am the beginning, the end and the middle of created things, Arjuna; among sciences I am the science of the Self, of debators I am the logic.

33

Of the letters I am A and of compounds the dual; inexhaustible Time I am. I am the Sustainer who faces all ways.

A, the first letter, is also the first phase of the monosyllable OM and is equated with the Purusha entering into Prakriti, the consonants. Every consonant is presumed to carry the vowel 'A' unless otherwise marked, even though it is not written; that is why one can say either 'Ram' or 'Rama.'

In Sanskrit a compound of two words each retaining its equal importance, such as 'Ramakrishna' is termed a dual.

God is spoken of as Mahakala, or Great Time, beginningless and endless.

34

I am Death that devours all. I am the prosperity of those who are to prosper. I am the goddesses presiding over the qualities of fame, fortune, speech, memory, intelligence, constancy, forbearance.

35

Among the Sama hymns I am Brihatsama. I am the Gayathri among metres; of months I am Margashirsha, and of the seasons I am spring.

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36

I am the gambling of the fraudulent, the lustre of the illustrious; I am victory, I am effort, I am sattva in the sattvic.

There is no question of moral or immoral here but of the essential energy or type or representative. If the Lord is the sattva of the sattvic, He is equally the rajas of the rajasic (therefore 'victory') and the tamas of the tamasic (therefore 'gambling').

37

Of the Vrishnis I am Vasudeva, of the Pandavas the Wealth-winner, of Sages Vyasa and of poets Ushanas.

The Vrishnis are Krishna's own tribe and Vasudeva is his human name. Similarly 'the Wealth-Winner' is an epithet of Arjuna among the Pandavas.

The word used for 'Sage' here is 'Muni,' the epithet applied to Kapila in v. 26. Vyasa is the author of the Mahabharata in which the Bhagavad Gita occurs.

38

Of those who chastise I am the rod, of those who seek Victory the statesmanship, of hidden things I am the silence, of those who know I am the knowledge.

39

Whatever, Arjuna, is the seed of all beings, that I am, nor can any being, whether moving or unmoving, exist without Me.

40

There is indeed no end to My Divine Manifestations, O Conqueror of the Foe. This is but a brief account I have given of the extent of My glories.

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41

Whatever there is glorious, pure, prosperous or powerful, know that it springs from a fragment of My Splendour.

42

But what need have you Arjuna, to know all this? It is enough to know that, supporting this whole creation with a fragment of Myself, I remain as I am.

This list of the Lord's glories or manifestations is in answer to Arjuna's request in v. 16. It is fitting therefore that it should end with a reminder that there is no need to know all this.

Here ends the Tenth Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita,
entitled
The Yoga of Manifestations

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

1

Arjuna said:

By the profound explanation of the Self that you have made out of grace towards me my delusion has been quite dispelled.

2

I have heard from you at length of the origin and dissolution of beings, O Lotus-Eyed, as also of Your imperishable Majesty.

Note: Verse 1 refers to the contents of Chapters Seven and Eight and Verse 2 to those of Chapters Nine and Ten.

3

As You have declared of Yourself, so it is, Divine Lord. But I long to see Your Heavenly Form, O Supreme Being.

(The glories of the Divine described in the previous Chapters awaken curiosity to visualize them. This demand for cosmic vision of the Lord thus comes naturally.)

4

If You deem it possible for me to see it, O Lord, then, Lord of Yoga, show me Your Imperishable Self.

('Yoga' here means Power.)

5

Sri Bhagavan said:

Behold My divine forms, O Son of Pritha, hundreds and thousands of them, of many sorts, many colours, many shape.

6

Behold Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Asvins and Maruts. Behold also, O Bharata, many wonders not seen before.

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(The *Adityas* are twelve, the *Vasus* eight, the *Rudras* eleven, the *Aswins* two and the *Maruts* in groups of seven. These are the divine beings or forces, different manifestations of the One.)

7

Behold here today, O Gudakesa, the entire universe, moving and unmoving and whatever more you would see, all centred in My body.

8

But you cannot see Me with these eyes of yours. I will give you divine sight: behold My Divine Power.

(Again here, 'Yoga' means 'Power.')

9

Thus speaking, O king, Hari, the great Lord of Yoga, showed the son of Pritha the Supreme Divine Form.

10

With innumerable mouths and eyes, innumerable wonderous sights, innumerable divine ornaments, innumerable divine weapons brandished.

11

Wearing heavenly garlands and attire, anointed with celestial unguents, wondrous, resplendent, boundless, facing all ways.

12

If the splendour of a thousand suns were to blaze forth simultaneously in the sky it would be like the splendour of that Great One.

13

Then in the body of the God of gods the Pandava beheld the entire (universe) in one form divided into many.

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14

The Wealth-Winner (Arjuna), astounded and hair standing on end, bowed his head before the Lord and with joined hands spoke.

15

Arjuna said:

O God, I see all the gods in Your body as well as the multitudes of beings of all kinds and the God Brahma on his lotus seat and all the Sages and celestial serpents.

Brahma is God in his aspect of Creator.

16

I see You of boundless form on every side, with numberless arms, bellies, mouths and eyes, O Lord of the Universe, O Cosmic Form; no end, no middle, no beginning do I see to you.

In the *Purusha-Sukta* of the Rig Veda (X) the Purusha is similarly described.

17

I see You with diadem, mace and disc, a radiance blazing everywhere, hard to look upon, dazzling like blazing fire and sun, immeasurable.

The mace and disc are the traditional weapons of Lord Krishna.

18

You are the Eternal Supreme to be realized, the ultimate Treasure of the Universe, the Imperishable, Lord of eternal Dharma. You are, I believe, the Primordial Purusha.

19

I see You with no beginning, no middle, no end, infinite in power, with countless arms, with the sun and moon for

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eyes, flaming fire for mouth, scorching this universe with Your radiance.

20

The space between heaven and earth and all the (four) quarters are pervaded by You alone. At sight of Your wondrous, terrifying form the three worlds tremble.

21

Behold galaxies of gods entering into You! Some in fear extol You with palms folded, companies of Maharashis and Siddhas crying 'All Hail!' extol You with their hymns.

22

The Rudras, Adityas, Sadhyas, Viswedevas, the two Asvins, the Maruts, the Ancestors, the hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras and Siddhas, all gaze astounded at You.

These are various categories of celestial and infernal beings. The Siddhas are men who have attained superhuman powers.

23

O mighty-armed, seeing Your huge form with myriad faces, eyes, feet, with myriad bellies bearing fearful tusks, the worlds are horrified. So too am I.

24

Seeing You reaching the sky, blazing with many colours, mouth wide open, with large fiery eyes, I am terrified at heart and find no courage or peace, O Vishnu!

Doctrinally Vishnu is God in His aspect of Preserver, and Krishna, is an Avatar and manifestation of Vishnu.

25

Seeing Your jaws terrible with tusks flaming like the fires of Cosmic Death, I find no directions of space and know no peace. Be gracious, O Lord of gods, refuge of the worlds!

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26-27

And all these sons of Dhritarashtra and hosts of the kings of earth, with Bhishma, Drona, Sutaputra and the warrior-chiefs of our side also rush headlong into Your fierce tusked jaws, terrible to behold. Some are to be seen caught in the gaps between the teeth, their heads crushed to powder.

'*Sutaputra*' meaning 'Son of a Charioteer' was a name used contemptuously for Karna.

28

As the torrents of many rivers hasten to the ocean, so do these heroes of the world of men into Your flaming jaws.

29

As moths plunge swiftly to their doom in a blazing fire, so do these men speed to their doom in Your jaws.

30

Devouring all the worlds on every side with Your flaming jaws, You lick them up. Your radiance lights the whole world while scorching it, O Vishnu.

31

Tell me who You are with so terrible a form. I bow down to You, Great God. Be gracious to me. I seek to know You, the Primal Being; I do not know Your nature.

32

Sri Bhagavan said:

I am Time the mighty Destroyer of worlds engaged now in world destruction. Even without you none of these warriors in hostile armies shall survive.

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33

Arise therefore and win fame. Conquer your enemies and enjoy a prosperous kingdom. By Me alone these have been already slain. Be merely the instrument, Left-Handed One (capable of shooting arrow with the left hand).

Actually Arjuna was ambidextrous.

The purpose of the cosmic vision is evidently to shatter the ego of Arjuna completely and to show him that it is the Divine Prakriti (will) that does everything. An individual is merely an instrument in Her hand. He must follow Her and submit his ego at the feet of the Divine. Vide XVIII, 59: "If prompted by egoism, you think 'I will not fight,' this determination of yours is vain. Prakriti will compel you to fight."

34

Slay Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and other great warriors slain already by Me. Have no fear. Fight and you shall conquer the enemy in battle.

35

Sanjaya said:

Hearing these words of Kesava, the Crowned One joined his hands and, trembling, prostrated before him again and then said in a choked voice, overcome by fear:

36

It is but right, O Hrishikesha, that the world is delighted and rejoices in Your praise, the demons flee to all sides in fear and the hosts of the siddhas bow down to You.

37

Why should they not bow down to You, Great One, Originator even of Brahma? O Unbounded God of gods, Refuge of the worlds, You are the Eternal Being, the Non-Being, and the Supreme beyond both.

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38

You are the Primal God, the Primordial Purusha, the Supreme Refuge of this universe. You are the Knower and what is to be known, the Supreme abode; all this universe is pervaded by You with Your endless forms.

39

You are Vayu (Wind), Yama (Death), Agni (Fire), Varuna (oceans), the Moon, Prajapati (the First Ancestor) and the Great Grand Sire. Salutations to You! A thousand times and ever again salutations to You.

40

Salutations to You before, behind and on every side, All-in-all, of endless power, Immeasurable; You pervade all and thus are all.

41-42

For whatever I have rashly or lightly said, calling You 'Krishna, Yadava, friend,' treating You as a friend, ignorant of this greatness of Yours, for any disrespect I have shown in play or repose, when sitting or at meals, O Achyuta, alone or in company, I now implore You, the Immeasurable, for pardon.

43

You are the Father of this world, of the moving and unmoving, its great and revered Guru. There is none equal to You in the three worlds, who then can surpass You, Lord of Boundless Might?

44

Therefore, bowing down to You and prostrating my body at Your feet, I crave forgiveness, Adorable Lord. Bear

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with me, as a father with his son, as a friend with his friend, as a lover with his beloved.

45

I rejoice that I have seen what none have seen before, and yet my mind is shaken with fear. Show me only Your usual form. Be gracious, Lord God, Refuge of the worlds.

46

Let me see You in the same form as before, four-armed wearing a crown, and with mace and disc in hand, O Thousand-Armed Cosmic Form.

Even now, when imploring a return to normal vision, Arjuna still considers it normal to see Sri Krishna with four arms as in iconography.

47

Sri Bhagavan said:

Out of grace for you, I have shown you by My yogic power this supreme form of Mine, splendid, universal, infinite, primeval, never before seen by any other.

Actually, Sri Krishna had once given a brief glimpse of his cosmic form to his foster-mother Yashoda and once as a warning to Duryodhana, the villain of the Mahabharata.

48

I am not to be seen in such form by any other than you, great hero of the Kurus, whether through the Vedas or through sacrifice or study (of scriptures), or gift or ritual or severe austerity.

49

Be not afraid or bewildered at having seen this terrible form of Mine. With fear dispelled and heart made glad behold My usual form again.

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50

Sanjaya said:

Having spoken thus to Arjuna, Vasudeva showed again in usual form. In that gentle form the Great One calmed his fear.

51

Arjuna said:

Now that I again see this gentle human form of Yours, O Janardana, I am composed again and restored to my own nature.

52

Sri Bhagavan said:

Very hard it is to see the form of Mine which you have seen. Even the gods ever long to see this form.

53

I am not to be seen in such form as you have seen Me by study of the Vedas or by austerity or gifts or sacrifice.

54

Only by unswerving devotion can I be known and truly seen in this form, Arjuna, and even be entered into, O Tormentor of the Foe.

55

He who performs actions for Me, takes Me for his Goal is devoted to Me and is free from attachment and aversion towards all beings, he comes to Me, O Pandava.

Here ends the Eleventh Chapter, entitled
The Vision of the Cosmic Form

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CHAPTER TWELVE

1

Arjuna said:

Of those devotees who steadily meditate upon you in this manner (i.e. with forms and attributes) and those who meditate upon the Imperishable, the Unmanifest, who are better versed in yoga?

2

Bhagavan replied:

Those who fixing their minds on Me meditate on Me with steadfastness and who have supreme faith, I deem to be the highest among yogins.

3-4

Those who steadfastly meditate on the Imperishable, the Indescribable, the Unmanifest, Immutable, Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, stable and Immovable, Eternal,—having their senses under control, evenminded under all circumstances, engaged in the welfare of all beings—they reach only Me.

5

More difficult is the task of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifest; the Goal, the Unmanifest, is hard to attain for the embodied beings.

6-7

But those who surrendering all actions to Me, meditate upon Me and worship Me with single-minded devotion, whose hearts are fixed on Me, I speedily rescue from the ocean of death-bounded samsara.

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8

Fix your thought on Me alone, center your mind and reason on Me. Then, without doubt, you will abide in Me.

9

If you cannot fix your mind steadily on Me, Oh Dhananjaya, then seek to reach Me by the yoga of constant practice (Abhyasayoga).

10

If you are unable to practise that yoga either, then practise performing actions for My sake. This will help you to attain perfection.

11

If you are unable to do even this, then taking refuge in Me, self-controlled, abandon the fruit of all actions.

(performed entirely without selfish motives as service to God)

12

Better indeed is knowledge than practice; meditation better than knowledge; the abandonment of the fruit of action better than meditation. Peace results from this abandonment.

13

He who hates no single being, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who has no attachments and is free of egoism, equal in pain and pleasure and forbearing,

14

who is ever content and balanced in mind, self-controlled and firm in his conviction, with mind and intellect fixed on Me, he My devotee, is dear to Me.

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15

He by whom the world is not afflicted and who is not afflicted by the world, who is free from pleasure, anger, fear and anxiety—he is dear to Me.

16

He who has no wants, who is pure, prompt, unconcerned, free from anxiety, renouncing all undertakings, he My devotee, is dear to Me.

17

He who neither rejoices nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing good and evil, full of devotion, he is dear to Me.

18-19

He who is the same to foe and friend and also in honour and dishonour; the same in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain; free from attachment; to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, contented with whatever comes to him, homeless, steadyminded and full of devotion—that man is dear to Me.

20

They who follow this immortal dharma described here, endued with faith and devotion and to whom I am Supreme (regarding Me as their supreme Goal), are exceedingly dear to Me.

Here ends the Twelfth Chapter entitled
The Yoga of Devotion

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1

Sri Bhagavan said:

This body, O Son of Kunti, is known as the Field; and he who is aware of it is called the Knower of the Field by the wise.

(Here 'knower' means 'illuminer')

2

And know that I am the Knower of the field in all the fields, O Bharata. The knowledge of the Field and the knower of that, in my opinion, is true Knowledge.

3

Hear what I say briefly: What the Field is, of what nature, what its modifications, what its source, also what He (i.e. the Knower of the field) is and what is His power.

4

It has been sung by the Rishis in manifold ways in various inspired verses and also expressed in the Brahma Sutras in reasoned and analytic texts.

The Gita discusses this age-old crucial topic, already handled by the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras or Vedanta Sutras of Badarayana. Shankaracharya understands 'Brahma Sutra etc.' to mean sentences indicating the Brahman in the Upanishads and not actually the Sutras of Badarayana.

5-6

The (five) great elements, ego, reason, the unmanifest the ten sense organs and the one (mind) and the five objects of senses, desire, aversion, happiness, misery, aggregate (the body), intelligence (the visible activity) and firmness—these, in brief, constitute the Field and its modifications.

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This is the objective world of which the Self is aware; of these are the twenty-four principles included in the Prakriti of the Samkhyas.

7-11

Humility, lack of hypocrisy (i.e. unpretentiousness), non-violence, forgiveness, straightforwardness, service of the Guru, purity, firmness (or steadiness), self-control, detachment from the objects of the senses, also absence of egoism, perception of the evils of birth, death, old age, disease and misery; non-attachment, absence of self-identification with son, wife, home etc., and constant equanimity of mind in desirable and undesirable events, unflinching and unswerving devotion to Me, resort to solitary places, distaste for the society of men, constant adherence to the Knowledge of the Self (or fixity in Self-knowledge) and perception of philosophical truths—all this is called 'wisdom' (*jnana*); what is not this is ignorance (*ajnana*).

12

I shall now describe that which ought to be known: (*jneya*); knowing which one attains immortality. It is the beginningless Supreme Brahman, which is called neither Being — *Sat*, nor non-Being — *asat*, (i.e. which is beyond the duality of the *Sat* and *Asat*, the manifest and the unmanifest.)

13

It has hands and feet on all sides, has eyes, heads and faces in all directions, has ears everywhere. It abides in the world enveloping everything.

14

Though it appears to be engrossed in the qualities (or activities) of the senses, yet is free from them all; unattached, it supports all; free from qualities (*gunas*), it enjoys the qualities.

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15

It is within and without (all) beings, immovable as well as movable; it is unknowable on account of its subtlety; it is far as well as near.

16

Although undivided, it appears to be divided in beings. That is to be understood as the support of (all) beings; pervades (them) and rules (over them)—devouring and (yet) generating.

17

It is the light of all lights and is said to be beyond darkness. It is wisdom (*jnana*), the object of wisdom (*jneya*) and the goal of wisdom, residing in the hearts of all.

18

Thus in brief the Field, the wisdom and the object of wisdom have been explained. My devotee, having understood this, attains My status.

Note: Here ends the topic of *jneya*.

19

Know that Prakriti (matter) and Purusha (Spirit) are both without beginning and that modifications and qualities are born of Prakriti.

20

Prakriti is said to be the cause of the effect (viz., the body) and the instruments (viz., the senses[1]). Purusha is said to be the cause of the experience of pleasure and pain.

[1]Alternate rendering; cause of the generation of causes and effects.

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21

Purusha residing in Prakriti enjoys the qualities born from Prakriti. His attachment to the qualities is the cause of his birth in good and evil wombs.

22

And the Supreme Purusha residing in this body is known as the Spectator, the Permitter, the sustainer, the enjoyer, the Supreme Lord and the Highest Self.

23

One who knows thus Purusha and Prakriti together with the qualities, is never born again, although engaged in all sorts of activities.

Here ends the topic of Purusha and Prakriti. The Gita adopts the Samkhya Principles but adds a higher Purusha over and above the two. Essentially the Gita-doctrine is non-dualistic, comprehending other principles.

24

Some see the Self within oneself by meditation. Others by the Samkhya Yoga (i.e. Jnana Yoga, the yoga of Wisdom), while some others by the Karma yoga (the yoga of Action).

25

Some, however, not understanding (these yogas) listen to others, who know and thus become devoted. They too, who are intent on hearing, surely cross (the ocean of death).

This stanza probably refers to Bhaktiyoga (Yoga of Devotion). The different yogas are the different spiritual paths suitable to men of different temperaments. In the first three, personal effort is essential, while in the last surrender is more important than effort. Their destination is, however, the same.

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26

Know O best of Bharatas, that whatever is born, immobile or mobile, is born from the union of the Field and the Knower of the Field.

27

He who sees the Supreme Lord residing equally in all beings—the Imperishable One among the perishable, —sees (truly).

28

He who sees the Lord residing equally everywhere, does not destroy the Self by the Self and hence reaches the highest state.

29

He who sees (realizes) that actions of all kinds are being performed by Prakriti alone and that Self is inactive, (truly) sees.

The Self is only a witness to the dynamic show of Prakriti that is not apart from it.

30

When he sees the separate existence of beings as rooted in the One and spread out from that, he attains Brahman.

31

This eternal Supreme Self, though dwelling in the body, O Son of Kunti, neither does (anything) nor is attached, as He is beginningless and has no qualities.

32

Just as the all pervading ether, being subtle, is not affected, (tainted or contaminated) (by anything), even so, the Self pervading the whole body is not tainted.

'Polluted' is equally good — used by some translators = *lipyate*.

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33

Just as the single sun illumines this whole world, even so the Knower of the Field illumines the entire Field, O Bharata.

34

Those who perceive with the eye of wisdom the distinction between the Field and the Knower of the Field in this manner and also the liberation of beings from Prakriti, reach the Supreme (Brahman).

Here ends the Thirteenth Chapter entitled
The distinction between the Field and the Knower
of the Field

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1

Sri Bhagavan said:

Again I shall declare to you, the Supreme, highest and best wisdom, realizing which all the sages have attained hence the highest perfection.

2

Having attained this wisdom those who became one with Me, are not born at the time of creation nor are they afflicted at the time of dissolution.

3

The great Prakriti is My womb. Into that I cast My seed. Thence are all creatures born, O Bharata.

4

Of all the forms that are born from whatever wombs, Prakriti is the great Womb—(The Mother) and I am the Father, who cast the seed, O Son of Kunti.

5

Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the qualities that are born from Prakriti. They bind the imperishable spirit to the body, O Mighty-armed One.

6

Of these, Sattva, on account of its purity, is illuminating and flawless. It binds (the embodied spirit) through attachment to happiness and knowledge, O sinless one.

7

Know Rajas to be of the nature of passion, born of desire and attachment. It binds, O son of Kunti, the embodied spirit by attachment to action (and its fruit).

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8

Know that Tamas, which deludes all beings, is born of ignorance; it binds (the embodied beings) by error, sloth, sleep (and the like), O Bharata.

9

Sattva leads (a man) to happiness, O Bharata; Rajas to action; while Tamas, veiling wisdom, urges (him) to error.

10

Sattva prevails overcoming Rajas and Tamas, O Bharata; and Rajas prevails overpowering Sattva and Tamas, and Tamas prevails suppressing Sattva and Rajas.

11

When in the body with all its gates (viz., the senses) there springs forth light and wisdom, one should know that Sattva has prevailed.

12

Greed, activity, undertaking of actions (with a selfish motive), restlessness and desire are born when Rajas prevails, O Best of the Bharata.

13

When Tamas predominates darkness, inactivity, error and illusion come forth, O delighter of the Kurus.

14

When a person is dissolved (i.e. dies) with Sattva predominating, he reaches the pure worlds of the highest wisdom.

15

When he is dissolved with Rajas over-powering, he is born among those attached to action; dissolved when Tamas

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predominating, he is born in the wombs of the ignorant (i.e. animals, birds, etc.)

16

They say that the fruit of Sattvic action is Sattvic and pure. The fruit of the Rajasic action, however, is sorrow; Ignorance is the result of tamasic action.

17

Wisdom springs from Sattva; greed, indeed, from Rajas, and from Tamas arise error, delusion and ignorance.

18

Those who abide in Sattva go higher (i.e. to the higher world): those of Rajasic nature stay in the middle (world); those of Tamasic nature, in the lowest quality, go to the lowest.

19

When the seer clearly sees that there is no agent (or doer) apart from the qualities and knows (Me) beyond the qualities, he attains to My Being. (This is known as 'Viveka'— which leads to wisdom).

20

An embodied being, having transcended these three qualities arising from the body, becomes free from birth, death, old age and sorrow and attains Immortality.

One has to transcend the Sattva also, as it creates egoism of a subtle nature and binds the person.

21

Arjuna said:

What are the marks of One who has transcended these three qualities, O Lord? How does he behave? And how does he transcend them?

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22

Sri Bhagavan replied:

When Light, activity and delusion (or ignorance) come, O son of Pandu, he is not averse to them, nor does he desire them, when they do not come.

23

Like an aloof witness, he is not disturbed by the gunas (qualities); he stays firm, does not waver, considering that action proceeds from the gunas.

24

He is the same in pain and pleasure, self-poised, of equal value are to him clod of earth, stone and gold; the pleasant and unpleasant, censure or praise he regards alike.

25

The same in honour and dishonour towards, friends and foes; he who abandons the initiative in all undertakings— is called one beyond qualities.

26

And he who serves Me with love and undeviating devotion, completely transcends the qualities and merges in Brahman.

27

For, I am the abode of Brahman, that is immortal, and imperishable, of Dharma that is perennial, and utter bliss.

Here ends the Fourteenth Chapter entitled
The Yoga of Division of the Three Qualities

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1

Sri Bhagavan said:

The asvattha (tree) with roots above and branches below is said to be imperishable. The Vedas are its leaves. He who knows this knows the Vedas.

The asvattha is the pippal tree sacred not only to the Hindus but also to the Buddhists and others. It means literally 'ever-changing' or momentary; yet it is said to be imperishable as it has neither beginning nor end. 'Roots above and branches below' indicates that the ultimate source of everything is the transcendental Being manifesting itself also on the physical plane.

2

Its branches spread above and below, growing well on *gunas* (the three qualities of Prakriti). The objects of the senses are its foliage and its roots stretch below in the world of men leading to actions which are binding.

3-4

Its (real) form cannot be ascertained here, nor its end, nor beginning, nor support. After cutting this deep-rooted asvattha tree with the strong (unfailing) sword of non-attachment that state should be sought on attaining which one does not return (to this world), saying "I surrender myself completely to that Supreme Being (Purusha) from which this ancient activity (of creation) began to flow."

Apart from its source, Brahman, the world has no existence. It is perceived because of the senses and the mind and is thus the creation of the mind. To make the mind quiescent by detachment and to direct it towards enquiry is the only way to attain the Self—the Brahmic state.

5

The undeluded, those who are free from pride and ignorance, who have overcome the evil of attachment, who

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are ever devoted to the Self, who have turned away from desires and are entirely beyond the dualities of pleasure and pain, attain that imperishable state.

6

Neither sun, nor moon, nor fire illumine this state on attaining which one does not return. And this is My supreme abode.

7

A fragment of Myself, eternal (like Myself) becomes the jiva (the individual self) in the world and attracts to itself the six sense-organs, including the mind, based on Prakriti.

8

When the Lord (Isvara) takes a body and also when He leaves it (*lit.* ascends) He takes these (the six organs) and departs, like the wind that takes (and wafts) scents from their receptacles (flowers, etc.).

9

Presiding over the ear, the eye, the skin, the tongue, the nose and the mind He enjoys the sense-objects (so long as he is in a body).

10

The extremely deluded persons do not perceive Him (as the indwelling Self) when in association with the gunas He ascends (from a body) or dwells (in one) or experiences (sense-objects); only those who have the eye of wisdom see.

11

With great effort Yogis see Him dwelling within themselves, but unenlightened persons, even if they strive, cannot see Him.

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12

The lustre in the sun which illumines the whole world and that which is in the moon and the fire, know that to be My lustre.

13

Entering the earth I support (all) beings with (my) power, and as soma, the strengthgiving juice (moon), I nourish all plants.

14

Having entered, as fire, into the bodies of living beings and uniting with the Prana and the Apana (life-forces moving upward and downward), I digest the four kinds of food.

15

Moreover, I reside in the hearts of all; from Me come memory and knowledge as well as their loss. I am He to be known by all the Vedas. I alone am the author of Vedanta as well as the knower of the Vedas.

16

There are two Persons (Purushas) in the world—the perishable and the imperishable. The perishable (comprises) all creatures, the imperishable is what is immutable.

17

But there is another over and above (these), the Highest known as the Supreme Self (Paramatma). He is the imperishable Lord who, entering the three worlds, supports them.

18

Since I transcend the perishable and am the imperishable I am known in the world as well as in the Vedas as the Supreme Person (Purushottama).

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19

The undeluded person who knows Me thus as the Supreme Person is all-knowing and worships Me with his whole being, O Bharata.

20

I have revealed to you, O sinless one, this supreme secret. One who knows this becomes wise and attains the goal of his life, O Bharata.

Here ends the Fifteenth Chapter entitled
The Yoga of the Supreme Person

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1—3

O Bharata, one born with virtues of a divine nature is endowed with fearlessness, absolute purity of mind, establishment in the serenity of wisdom, charity, self-restraint, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, penance, straightforwardness, non-violence, truth, freedom from wrath, resignation, peace (of mind), absence of malice, compassion towards beings, non-attachment (to sensual pleasures), softness, gentility, want of indiscretion, brilliance, forgivenses, fortitude, purity, lack of hatred and absence of undue pride.

4

While one born with properties of a demoniac nature is marked by hypocrisy, arrogance, pride (self-conceit), anger, harshness and ignorance, O son of Pritha.

5

It is deemed that attributes of a divine nature lead one to salvation, while those of a demoniac nature to bondage.

6

There are two types of beings in the world—divine and demoniac. The divine type is spoken of at length. Listen about the demoniac (asuric) type from Me, O son of Pritha.

7

Men of a demoniac nature understand neither performance of right nor prohibition of wrong action (or the ways of action and renunciation). Among them, there is neither purity, nor character, nor truth.

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8

They say that the world is unreal, baseless, devoid of God, mutually ill-conceived (or not brought about in the regular causal sequence) and is the product of desire (i.e. sexual impulse). What else (they say), is there?

9

Holding such views, these wretched souls of little understanding perform fierce actions, and ill-disposed, lead the world to chaos.

10

These (men) of impure vows, obsessed by insatiable passion, full of hypocrisy, self-conceit and self-intoxication, adopting false doctrines through confusion, set out to act (accordingly).

11

Entertaining endless desires resulting in death, they consider the enjoyment of the objects of sense as the highest good, being cocksure of the same as the highest purpose (of life).

12

Held in bondage by hundreds of ties of hope, desire and anger, they seek to amass wealth by unjust means for the sake of enjoying the objects of sense.

13—16

Deluded by ignorance, saying, "Today I have attained this and (tomorrow) shall fulfil that desire of mine; this wealth is already mine and that also will become mine; this foe I have already killed and others also I shall do away with. I am the Lord, enjoyer, perfect, strong and happy. I am wealthy and born in a noble family; who else is like

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me? I shall sacrifice, give in charity and shall rejoice," these men, with their minds distracted in various ways and involved in numerous delusions, extremely attached to the enjoyment of objects, reach their doom in the deepest hell.

17

Self-conceited and stiff, these wealthy, proud and intoxicated (persons) perform sacrifices only in name with ostentation and without observing rituals.

18

Resorting to egoism, force, pride, passion and anger, these malicious persons hate Me, dwelling in their own bodies, as well as in those of others.

19

Into demoniac wombs alone, I forever cast these cruel haters, degenerate and unholy, to be reborn in the world.

20

These fools, O son of Kunti, born in demoniac wombs again and again, reach the fallen condition without coming to Me.

21

This is the threefold gate to hell leading to one's ruin: Passion, Anger and Greed. Therefore one should abandon this trio.

22

A man free from these three, O son of Kunti, works out his own good and hence reaches the highest state.

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23

He who abandons the injunctions of the scriptures and behaves according to the impulses of his desires, attains neither perfection nor happiness nor the highest state of salvation.

24

Let the Scripture, therefore, be your authority in deciding what is right and what is wrong action. Having understood the words of the scriptural injunction, you should act in this world.

'Scripture' is defined as that which gives pure means of attaining the purpose of life and also states the contrary ones which defile this purpose.

Here ends the Sixteenth Chapter entitled
The Yoga of the Division of Attributes of Divine and Demoniac Natures

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1

Arjuna said:

What is the nature—pure or passionate or dull (sattvic, rajasic or tamasic)—of those, O Krishna, who giving up the ordinances of the scriptures, worship (offering sacrifices, giving gifts, etc.) with faith?

This question arises out of the statement of the Lord in verse 24 of Chapter XVI.

2

Sri Bhagavan said:

Faith, which is inborn in embodied beings, is three-fold: pure, passionate and dull. Hear now about it.

3

The faith of everyone is according to his nature, O Bharata. Man is essentially endowed with faith. What his faith is, that indeed is he.

4

Those endowed with purity (or goodness) worship the gods; those (endowed) with passion worship Yakshas and Rakshasas (i.e. demons); and the dull ones full of ignorance worship corpses and hosts of spirits.

5-6

Those men who practise severe austerities not enjoined by the ordinances of the scriptures, being full of hypocrisy, egoism, desire and passion, tormenting all the senses in their bodies and ME as well presiding over their inner being, know them to be of demoniac resolve.

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7

The food as well, which is dear to all, is three-fold. So also is sacrifice, austerity and charity. Hear now their distinctions.

Because men are of three-fold nature—pure, passionate and dull—, the food they eat and the activities they perform are also of three-fold nature.

8

Food, which promotes longevity, vitality (or intelligence), energy, health, happiness and delight, which is delicious, bland, nourishing and agreeable is dear to the pure.

9

Food which is bitter, sour, saline, very hot, pungent, dry and burning and which gives pain, grief and disease is dear to men of passion.

10

Food, which is stale (or spoiled) and insipid, putrid, and polluted, left off by others and impure is dear to the dull.

11

The sacrifice, performed with rites ordained by the scriptures by persons who do not expect any fruit therefrom and performed with a sense of duty, with mind equipoised, is said to be pure.

12

Know that sacrifice to be of a passionate type which is performed, O best of the Bharatas, with a fruit in view and with a sense of self-importance (or for the sake of display).

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13

That sacrifice which is performed with rites ordained by the scriptures, in which food is not distributed, no hymns chanted, no sacrificial fees offered and which is done without faith, is known to be of the dull type.

14

Worship of the gods, Brahmans, teachers (or elderly persons) and the wise, purity, straightforwardness, continence and nonviolence—this is called austerity of the body.

15

Truthful, agreeable and beneficial words which do not annoy and the study of the scriptures are said to be austerity of speech.

Jnaneshwara adds 'utterance of the divine name' to this list.

16

Serenity, gentleness, silence, self-control and purity are said to be austerity of mind.

17

This three-fold austerity performed with utmost faith by persons harbouring no desire for its fruit is said to be pure (sattvic).

18

The austerity that is practised for glorification, honour and to gain respect and with ostentation, which is unstable and insecure is said to be passionate (rajasic).

19

The austerity that is performed with self-torture, out of a deluded understanding or for the purpose of injuring others is said to be of a dull type (tamasic).

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20

The gift that is made without expectation of return, considering it as a duty, given at the proper place, at the right time and to a worthy person is known as pure (sattvic).

21

The gift that is made begrudgingly, with expectation of return or reward is known to be of a passionate type (rajasic)

22

The gift that is made to unworthy persons at an improper place and at the wrong time, with a feeling of contempt (or without proper ceremony) and without regard is declared dull (tamasic).

23

Brahman is declared to be three-fold—Aum—Tat—Sat. By this at the beginning were created the Brahmanas, the Vedas and the sacrifices.

'Aum' is the verbal symbol of Reality; it is the highest Mantra and is the essence of the Vedas. 'Tat' is that transcendental Being which is beyond the world, the witness of all. It is Reality, Brahman. 'Sat' is defined in verses 26 and 27.

24

Hence the acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity as ordained by the scriptures start with the utterance of 'Aum' by the followers of the Vedas.

25

With the utterance of the word 'Tat' the various acts of sacrifice, austerity and gift are performed by the seekers of liberation without seeking recompense.

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26

The word 'Sat' is used in the sense of reality and goodness. So also, O son of Pritha, the word 'Sat' is used for a praiseworthy act.

Such as a marriage ceremony according to Shankara or any pure act according to Jnaneshwara.

27

Steadfastness in sacrifice, penance and gift is also expressed by the word 'Sat' and so is action done for its sake 'Sat.'

28

That which is offered in sacrifice, given in charity, performed as a penance and whatever is done (such as praise, homage, etc.), without faith is known as 'asat,' O son of Pritha; it is counted for naught in this as also in the next world.

Here ends the Seventeenth Chapter of the
Bhagavad Gita entitled
The Yoga of the Division of the Threefold Faith

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1

Arjuna said:

O (Lord) of mighty arms, I would like to know the true principle of 'Sannyasa (renunciation) and that of 'Tyaga' (abandonment) separately, O Controller of senses and destroyer of Keshin.

Keshin is the name of a demon killed by Sri Krishna. 'Sannyasa' and 'Tyaga' appear to be synonyms, but the Gita makes a subtle distinction between the two, as given in the next verse.

2

Sri Bhagavan said:

Renouncing actions prompted by desire (for the enjoyment of the fruit), the wise understand to be 'Sannyasa.' The abandonment of the fruit of all actions they declare as 'Tyaga.'

The meanings of these terms as given by the Gita are unorthodox. The Gita has used the old terms in a new sense.

3

Some sages declare that action should be discarded as it leads to bondage; while others say that action such as sacrifice, gifts and penance should not be given up.

4

Hear from Me the truth about this matter concerning 'Tyaga,' O best among the Bharatas. 'Tyaga' (abandonment) is, indeed, threefold, O best of men.

5

Action such as sacrifice, gifts and austerity should not be abandoned; it must be performed. For, sacrifice, gifts and austerity, in the case of the wise, purify them.

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Shankara explains the word 'wise' as those who do not care for the fruit!

6

These actions, however, should be performed giving up attachment and (desire for) fruit—this is My firm and best conviction, O son of Pritha.

7

Renunciation of action ordained by scriptures is not proper. Its abandonment out of ignorance is known to be tamasic.

Shankara explains the word 'Niyata' in the original text as 'Nitya,' meaning 'to be performed daily,' of course, as prescribed by the scriptures. Jnaneshwara explains it as 'arising out of one's nature' i.e. 'natural to oneself,' befitting the order and stage of life.

8

One who abandons action as leading to misery, out of fear for the trouble it involves, does not receive the fruit of abandonment, which is of the rajasic type.

9

That abandonment is known as 'good' (Sattvic) which consists in performing the prescribed action out of a sense of duty, O Arjuna, giving up attachment and the (desire for) fruit.

10

He who neither hates a disagreeable action nor is attached to an agreeable one, who is imbued with the quality of goodness, who is possessed of intelligence and has his doubts dispelled is a man of sattvic abandonment.

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11

It is impossible for an embodied being to give up all actions completely. But he who gives up the fruit of action is declared a man of real abandonment.

12

Threefold is the fruit of action: evil, good and mixed. It accrues after death to those who have not abandoned, but never to those who are renouncers.

According to most of the commentators, evil fruit consists in going to hell or obtaining the birth of animals etc.; good fruit lies in going to heaven or obtaining the birth of gods such as Indra and mixed fruit means getting the birth of man on earth.

Shankara takes 'Atyagins' in the text to mean 'Karma-yogins' and 'Sannyasins' to mean 'renouncers' of all actions enjoined by the scriptures.

13-14

Hear from Me the five factors, O Mighty-armed (Arjuna) that contribute to the accomplishment of all actions, as mentioned in the doctrine of the Vedanta (or Samkhya):

The body, the agent, various instruments (such as sense-organs), various different functions and the fifth among these, Providence.

Shankara interprets 'Samkhya' as 'Vedanta'; Ramanuja explains it as 'that which is realised by the knowledge about the Vedic lore'; while Tilak and others understand it as 'Samkhya doctrine.'

'The different activities,' according to Shankara and Jnaneshwara refer to the various manifestations of one power, e.g. wind, in the form of speech, movement of limbs, yawning, etc. 'Providence,' they explain as the presiding deities of the organs such as the Sun for the eyes etc. It may also mean 'destiny' or the unknown factor called 'luck' or 'fate.'

15

Whatever action, either prescribed or prohibited, man does either through his body, speech or mind, requires these five causes.

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16

Such being the case, a man of perverse understanding who considers himself to be the doer, due to impure reason, does not (truly) see.

17

He who is free from egoism and whose mind is not stained does not slay, nor is he bound (by slaying) even though he slays all people.

18

Knowledge, object of knowledge and the Knower are the threefold incentives to action; (while) instruments (or sense organs), action and the agent are the threefold constituents of action.

19

Knowledge, action and the agent are said to be threefold according to the differences in modes(gunas), in the Samkhya works. Hear Thou about them duly.

20

Know that knowledge to be sattvic which sees the imperishable state of Oneness in all beings, the undifferentiated among the different modalities.

21

Know that knowledge to be rajasic (passionate) which sees manifold different states among all beings through differentiation.

22

And that knowledge which clings to one effect (i.e. a part of creation) as if it were a whole, without consideration for the cause (i.e. origin), that which is without reality and limited, should be known as tamasic.

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23

That action which is ordained by scriptures (or by the social and individual necessity), which is performed without attachment or aversion by one who does not seek fruit is known as sattvic (good).

24

And that action which is performed from egoism and with great strain by one who is desirous (of fruit) is declared to be rajasic (passionate).

25

That action which is undertaken from ignorance, with no consideration for the consequences, such as loss, violence and one's capacity to do it is declared to be tamasic (dull).

26

The agent who is free from attachment and egoism, who is endowed with firmness and strength or ability, who is equipoised in success or in failure is said to be sattvic.

27

That agent who is passionate, hankering after the fruit of actions, greedy, violent, impure and subject to joy and grief is declared to be rajasic.

28

The agent who is dissolute, vulgar, arrogant, deceitful, wicked, indolent, despondent and procrastinating is said to be tamasic.

29

Listen to the threefold division of intellect and firmness, described to you according to the modes, thoroughly and distinctively, O Conqueror of Wealth.

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30

That intellect, O son of Pritha, is sattvic which discerns activity and non-activity, what should be done and what should not be done, fear and fearlessness, bondage and freedom.

31

That intellect, O son of Pritha, is rajasic which knows but incorrectly dharma (right conduct) and adharma (wrong conduct), what should be done and should not be done.

32

That intellect, O son of Pritha, is tamasic which being clouded by ignorance considers adharma to be dharma and all things perversely.

33

That unwavering firmness is sattvic, O son of Pritha, by which through yoga, one controls the activities of the mind, life-breath and sense-organs.

34

And that resoluteness, O son of Pritha, is rajasic, by which one upholds piety (dharma), prosperity (artha) and desire (kama) expecting the fruit of action with great attachment.

35

That firmness, O son of Pritha, is tamasic, by which one of evil mind out of stupidity does not give up sleep, fear, grief, despondency and pride.

36

Now hear from Me the threefold happiness, O best among the Bharatas, in which by practice one finds delight and ends misery.

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37

That happiness is known as sattvic resulting from the clarity of intellect by meditation on the Self, which is like poison at the beginning (but) like nectar at the end.

38

That happiness is declared as rajasic which, to start with is like nectar on account of contact of objects with the sense-organs, but is like poison at the end.

39

That happiness is known as tamasic which is born of sleep, indolence and negligence, which both at the beginning and at the end stupefies the mind.

40

There is no existence either on this earth or in heaven among the gods, which is free from the three modes born of Prakriti.

41

Duties of the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, O tormentor of foes, are divided according to the qualities inherent in their nature.

Swabhava, translated as 'nature' above, may mean, says Shankara, Prakriti constituting three modes.

42

Serenity, control of the senses or self-restraint, austerity, (outward and inward) purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, knowledge, wisdom and faith (in God and scriptures)— these are the duties of the Brahmanas according to their nature.

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43

Heroism, fearlessness, steadfastness, alertness, not fleeing from battle, charity and lordliness—these are the duties of the Kshatriyas natural to them.

44

Cultivation of land, cattle-rearing and trade are the duties of the Vaishyas, born of their nature. Service is the duty of a Shudra natural to him.

It must be well remembered here that there is no reference to caste determined by birth in the Gita. What is given is the fourfold division of society according to the respective qualities natural to men. Even this division is not rigid. It is a part of the contemporary social order, and must be taken in that light. It should in no way be used as a defence for the caste system based on birth today in India.

45

Man attains highest Perfection being ever engaged in his own duty. Listen how a man engaged in his duty attains success.

Shankara interprets 'Siddhi' in the original as 'a State congenial and precedent to Perfection, i.e. the purification of the mind and the senses.' It does not mean perfection or liberation itself.

46

Man attains perfection by performing his duty as worship of Him, from whom all creatures are born and by whom all this is pervaded.

47

Better is one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well executed. One incurs no sin by performing one's duty ordained by nature.

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48

One should not abandon one's natural duty, O son of Kunti, though full of defects. All actions are covered with defects, like fire with smoke.

49

One whose mind is unattached, controlled and free from desire attains the highest state of Perfection in Brahman by Sannyasa (renunciation).

50

Know from Me in brief, O son of Kunti, how a man, who has attained perfection, realizes Brahman,—which is the highest consummation of the yoga of wisdom.

51-53

One endowed with extremely pure reason, controlled in mind by steadfastness and abandoning objects of senses such as sound etc., dispelling attachment and aversion, resorting to a solitary place, eating little, speech, body and mind subdued, always engages in the yoga of meditation and is dispassionate leaving aside egoism, violence, arrogance, lust, anger and greed, free from the feeling of 'mine' and full of peace, he is fit for becoming One with Brahman.

54

Becoming One with Brahman, the serene self neither grieves nor desires. Treating all alike, he attains the highest devotion to Me.

55

Through devotion he knows Me and My nature in truth and (thus) knowing Me in truth (or in essence) he forthwith enters into Me.

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56

And he, performing all actions with Me as his refuge and support, through My grace attains the eternal and imperishable abode.

57

Mentally surrendering all actions to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme, always concentrating your mind on Me, fix your heart ever on Me.

58

With mind reposed in Me, you will cross over all the difficulties through My grace; but if you do not hear Me through egotism, you will perish.

59

If out of egotism you decide not to fight, this resolve of yours is in vain (or futile). Nature (Prakriti) will compel you to fight.

60

That which you do not wish to perform from delusion, O son of Kunti, bound as you are by your duty inherent in your nature, you shall do even against your will.

61

The Lord resides in the hearts of all, O Arjuna, revolving all creatures by Prakriti as if mounted on a machine.

62

Surrender unto Him with all your heart, O Bharata. Through His grace you will attain supreme peace and the perennial abode.

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63

This wisdom, the secret of secrets, I have divulged to you. Reflect over this thoroughly and act as you please.

64

Listen again to My Supreme Word, the most secret of all. I shall tell you what is beneficial to you as you are My beloved and firm friend.

65

Fix your thought on Me; be devoted to Me; worship Me and bow down to Me. Indeed (thus) you will reach Me. This I truly promise to you, (as) you are dear to Me.

66

Leaving aside all dharmas, surrender to Me, as your sole Refuge. I shall relieve you of all (your) sins; do not grieve.

'Dharmas' refer to the rules of conduct based on social morality as given in the smriti works or minor Shastras. They are conventional and have a relative and temporal value. These cannot be relied upon as eternal and hence authentic and final. Shankara and Jnaneshwara include even the 'adharmas,' the traditional prohibitory rules in 'dharmas.' The real universal Law of conduct, the real 'Dharma' is stated here in preference to the minor conventional dharmas. It is the Dharma o 'Surrender,' recommended by sages—ancient and modern—as testified to by their lives.

67

This (secret), you should never preach to a man without austerity and devotion, neither to one unwilling to listen, nor to one who speaks ill of Me.

'Cast not pearls before swine,' says the Bible.

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68

One who, with ardent devotion to Me, will impart this supreme secret to My devotees shall undoubtedly come to Me.

69

And no one else among men does more loving service to Me than he; and no one else shall be dearer to Me than he in this world.

70

One who will study this sacred dialogue between us two, will please Me as if by worshipping Me with the sacrifice of wisdom; this is My conviction.

71

Also one full of faith and free from malice (to Me), who even listens (to this) will be liberated and will attain to the auspicious worlds of the righteous.

72

Did you hear this, O son of Pritha, with one-pointed (or whole) attention? Has the delusion of your ignorance completely vanished, O Dhananjaya?

73

Arjuna said:

The delusion is dispelled; the awareness (of the Self) I have gained, through your Grace, O Achyuta. I stand free from doubt. I shall do as you bid.

74

Sanjaya said:

Thus have I heard this marvellous dialogue between Vasudeva (Krishna) and the high-souled son of Pritha, which thrilled me to the very depth of my soul.

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75

Through the grace of Vyasa, I could listen to this Supreme secret, the yoga, from the Lord of Yoga Himself as He narrated it in person.

Vyasa, the celebrated author of the Mahabharata, graciously imparted a supernatural Eye to Sanjaya, so that the could see and hear all that was going on in the holy war, even though at a distance.

76

O King, recollecting now and then this marvellous holy dialogue of Keshava (Krishna) and Arjuna, I rejoice again and again.

77

And remembering constantly that most marvellous form of Hari (Krishna), great is my wonder, O king, and I rejoice again and again.

78

Wherever is Krishna the Lord of Yoga, wherever is Pritha's son, the archer: there are also the goddess of wealth, victory, prosperity and eternal righteousness. So I deem.

Krishna is the symbol of Siva, the Lord of Yoga, while Arjuna with bow and arrow is the symbol of Shakti, the Prakriti. Their union is the source of material and spiritual glory.

Here ends the Eighteenth Chapter entitled
The Yoga of Liberation and Surrender
This is the last and most inspiring revelation of
THE BHAGAVAD GITA

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